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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Govt puts job quota bill for Kannadigas on hold

This was after industrialists call it fascist, short-sighted

BENGALURU, 17 JULY

Karnataka government on Wednesday put on hold a bill, which mandated reservation for Kannadigas in the private sector. This was as industry veterans objected to the proposed quota, calling it 'fascist,' and 'short-sighted.'

The government also sought to reach out to the private sector, saying their interests will be protected.

The Cabinet on Monday cleared the Karnataka State Employment of Local Candidates in the Industries, Factories and Other Establishments Bill, 2024, making it compulsory for private firms to reserve jobs for Kannadigas.

The Cabinet on Monday cleared the Karnataka State Employment of Local Candidates in the Industries Bill, 2024 **PHOTO: PTI**

What does the bill say?

Firms must appoint 50 per cent of local candidates in management categories and 70 per cent in non-management,

If the candidates do not possess secondary school certificate with Kannada as a language, they should then pass a proficiency test.

The government may appoint an officer not below the rank of Assistant Labour Commissioner as the authorised officer regarding compliance of the provisions of the Act. Any Employer or Occupier or Manager of an Establishment, who contravenes the provisions of this Act should be liable for a penalty between Rs 10,000 to Rs 25,000.

Ministers vs industrialists

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar spoke in favour of the bill. He told reporters here that the Congress came to power in Karnataka to uphold the dignity of Kannadigas, be it the issue of signboards of private establishments, Kannada flag, Kannada language, culture, documents or specific percentage of reservation in jobs for Kannadigas.

Shivakumar clarified that the government will not interfere in technical areas.

Minister for Infrastructure Development, Medium and Heavy Industries MB Patil also backed the bill saying there is no doubt that Kannadigas should get jobs in Karnataka.

The move, however, has not gone down well with industry leaders. Well-known entrepreneur and former Chief Finance Officer of Infosys, TV Mohandas Pai dubbed the bill as 'fascist.' "This bill should be junked. It is discriminatory, regressive and against the Constitution @Jairam_Ramesh (Congress leader) is govt to certify who we are? This is a fascist bill as in Animal Farm, unbelievable that @INCIndia can come up with a bill like this?" Pai said on 'X'. Pharma Company Biocon MD Kiran Mazumdar Shaw said, "As a tech hub we need skilled talent and whilst the aim is to provide jobs for locals, we must not affect our leading position in technology by this move. There must be caveats that exempt highly skilled recruitment from this policy." —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

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>
> -Nara Lokesh, Andhra Pradesh Minister

2 JAWANS INJURED

12 Naxals shot dead near Ch'garh border

GADCHIROLI, 17 JULY

At least 12 Naxalites were killed and two security personnel injured in an encounter with police and commandos in Gadchiroli of Maharashtra near the Chhattisgarh border on Wednesday, officials said.

The heavy exchange of fire broke out in the afternoon between C60 commandos and Naxals in Wandoli village and continued for six hours, Gadchiroli Superintendent of Police Nilotpal said.

Police have recovered 12 bodies of Maoists from the spot besides seven automotive weapons, including 3 AK-47s, 2 INSAS rifles, a carbine and an SLR, he said.

One of the slain Naxals was identified as DVCM Laxman Atram alias Vishal Atram, incharge of Tipagad Dalam.

Maharashtra Home Minister Devendra Fadnavis has declared a Rs 51 lakh reward for C60 commando teams and Gadchiroli Police, Nilotpal said.

Further identification of Maoists and area search is continuing.

"The injured persons include a sub-inspector of C 60 and one jawan. They are out of danger, evacuated from the spot, and shifted to Nagpur," he added. —*PTI*

Key City hospitals to reserve beds for dengue patients

NEW DELHI, 17 JULY

To ensure effective management of moderate and severe cases of dengue, the Health department on Wednesday issued an order directing key government hospitals in Bengaluru to reserve a specific number of beds for patients suffering from the vector-borne disease. According to the order, KC General Hospital, CV Raman Hospital and GH Jayanagara have been asked to reserve 25 beds each while taluk hospitals in Yelahanka and KR Puram have been asked to reserve 10 beds each. The direction came a day after dengue cases in Karnataka crossed the 10,000 mark. —*PTI*

Eateries on Kanwar Yatra's route must show owner's name

MUZAFFARNAGAR, 17 JULY

Police here have ordered that all eateries on the Kanwar Yatra route should display names of owners to avoid any "confusion", a move seen by the Opposition parties as targeting Muslim traders. Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera called the order "state-sponsored bigotry". AIMIM President Asaduddin Owaisi compared it to Apartheid and Judenboykott, the boycott of Jewish businesses in Hitler's Germany. Muzaffarnagar police chief Abhishek Singh on Monday said, "Preparations of Sawan month have started. About 240km of Kanwar Yatra route falls in the district. All the eateries, including hotels, dhabas and carts have been asked to display the names of their proprietors." —*PTI*

Dubai Princess divorces husband in Insta post

DUBAI, 17 JULY

Shaikha Mahra Bint Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the daughter of Dubai's ruler, has publicly declared "divorce" from her husband, Sheikh Mana Bin Mohammed Bin Rashid bin Mana Al Maktoum, on Instagram. The declaration follows shortly after the birth of their first child, made public just over two months ago. "Dear Husband," the Dubai princess began. "As you are occupied with other companions, I hereby declare our divorce. I divorce you, I divorce you, and I divorce you. Take care. Your ex-wife." The couple got married in May last year, and they welcomed their daughter 12 months later. —*Agencies*

SEA OF MOURNERS

Devotees participate in an Ashura procession during Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar in, Bengaluru on Wednesday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

After attack, encounter on in Doda

JAMMU, 17 JULY

Security forces and terrorists exchanged fire twice briefly within a span of four hours in a forest area in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda, officials said on Wednesday.

Village Defence Guards also opened fire on observing suspicious movement outside their village, while two explosive shells were recovered from Gandoh area.

The exchange of fire was first reported at Kalaan Bhata at 10.45 pm on Tuesday and then near Panchan Bhata at 2 am during the ongoing anti-terrorist operation in the Desa forest, where four Army personnel were killed in the intervening night of Monday and Tuesday.

There are no reports of any casualties in the latest exchange of fire.

Troops of Rashtriya Rifles and Special Operations Group of Jammu and Kashmir Police had launched a joint cordon and search operation at Dhari Gote Urarbagi in the Desa forest belt, some 55 km from Doda. Efforts are underway to track down and neutralise the terrorists who have links with JeM. —*PTI*

8 INDIANS RESCUED FROM VESSEL THAT CAPSIZED IN OMAN

NEW DELHI, 17 JULY

At least nine sailors, including eight Indian nationals and a Sri Lankan citizen, have been rescued from the crew of Comoros flagged vessel, MT Falcon Prestige, that capsized on 14 July 2024 off the coast of Oman, people familiar with the matter said.

The vessel transmitted a distress call around 2200 hours on 14 July off the coast of Oman, they said.

The merchant vessel has a crew of 16, of which 13 are Indian seafarers, the sources said, adding the vessel seems to have capsized.

The 117m-long oil products tanker was built in 2007. Falcon Prestige was heading to the Yemeni port of Aden. —*PTI*

Valmiki funds used to buy liquor: ED

NEW DELHI, 17 JUL

Enforcement Directorate on Wednesday alleged that a "substantial" amount of funds "misappropriated" from the Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation Limited were used to procure liquor during the recently-concluded Lok Sabha elections apart from some highly-priced vehicles.

The federal probe agency that has arrested sitting Congress MLA and former minister B Nagendra issued a statement alleging the associates connected to the legislator were "implicated in fund diversion and cash management."

Nagendra, a former minister of Tribal Welfare and Sports, was arrested by the ED last week after it conducted raids against him and another Congress MLA from Raichur rural seat Basanagouda Daddal in Bengaluru.

Probe found, the agency claimed, that "about Rs 90 crore were diverted to 18 fake accounts in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana (from the funds of the Valmiki corporation). The diverted funds were then layered through fake and shell accounts, with cash and bullion dispersed among the accused.

"Nagendra, the former minister, also resigned following the exposure of the scam," the ED said.

"Additionally, high-end vehicles, including a Lamborghini, were purchased using proceeds from the scam," it said.

During the searches at the premises of Nagendra and Daddal (Corporation's Chairman), ED recovered "incriminating documents linking them to the handling of diverted funds during recent general elections."

The agency said some "incriminating" evidence related to the handling of these illicit funds was also discovered at the residence of Daddal. —*PTI*

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B Nagendra **PHOTO: FB**

- Nagendra, a former minister of Tribal Welfare and Sports, was arrested by the ED last week after it conducted raids against him and another Congress MLA from Raichur rural seat Basanagouda Daddal in Bengaluru.

Farmer cries outside govt office over land

A farmer with folded hands rolls on the floor outside the District Collector's office after his land was allegedly taken by a mafia, in Madhya Pradesh's Mandsaur, on Wednesday. Mandsaur Collector Dilip Yadav rejected the allegations. **PHOTO: PTI**

RAIL-CUM-ROAD MARVEL

B'luru gets South's 1st double-decker flyover

BENGALURU, 17 JULY

South India's first double-decker rail-cum-road flyover was on Wednesday partially opened for a trial run for the public, officials said.

Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru Development Minister DK Shivakumar conducted a 'trial walk' on the newly built flyover, which stretches from Ragigudda to Central Silk Board, and is part of the Yellow Line of the Bengaluru Metro.

Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy and other officials also joined the event, they said.

This double decker flyover built by the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) at a cost of Rs 449 crore will be open for vehicular movement only on one side of the flyover.

According to officials, the Central Silk Board Junction intersects with both the Outer Ring Road and Hosur Road. It is the busiest junction of Bengaluru, which has a large volume of vehicular movement and is a bottleneck for traffic flow.

The rail-cum-road flyover has been built to ease the traffic congestion at the Central Silk Board Junction from Ragigudda to Central Silk Board with loops and ramps.

The rail-cum-road flyover along with loops and ramps of length 5.12 km will facilitate signal-free travel from Ragigudda to reach HSR Layout and Hosur Road. It will also help travelling from KR Puram and Hosur Road will save time by more than 30 per cent.

Newly constructed 'Double Decker flyover' near Ragigudda Metro station opens on Wednesday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

The ramps from HSR Layout connecting to the road flyover towards Ragigudda and BTM layout for a length of 1.37 km is still under construction and expected to be commissioned by June-2025, it stated.

According to the BMRCL, this rail-cum-road flyover stands as a testament to Bengaluru's foray into innovative infrastructure. —*PTI*

UP DyCM's cryptic post on X hints at BJP split

LUCKNOW, 17 JULY

Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya on Wednesday said the party is bigger than the government, a cryptic remark on X that has fuelled speculation over a "rift" in the BJP state unit.

"The organisation is bigger than the government, the pain of the workers is my pain. No one is bigger than the organisation, the workers are the pride," the post shared by the office of the Deputy Chief Minister on X said.

It quoted a part of Maurya's address during the BJP's working committee meeting in Lucknow on Sunday. The post also had a picture of the meeting in the backdrop.

Keshav Prasad Maurya **PHOTO: FB**

The post comes a day after Maurya met BJP President JP Nadda in New Delhi amidst rumours of an alleged rift between him and Yogi Adityanath. Akhilesh Yadav alleged "infighting" in BJP . —*Salar News*

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM/@Shruti Hegde

Kannadiga titled as India's 1st Miss Universal Petite

BENGALURU, 17 JULY

Imagine doing a 36-hour shift in a hospital and then turning up willingly the next day to chip away the imperfections to become a beauty queen? That is what Shruti Hegde, a doctor who is currently pursuing MD in dermatology in Tumakuru and a beauty queen from Hubballi, Karnataka, has been doing since 2018. A little over a month ago, on 10 June, Hegde became India's first Miss Universal Petite, a pageant that was started in 2009 to give opportunity to shorter women, who found themselves often dwarfed by the amazonian standards when it comes to height. The pageantry is held in Tampa, Florida in the United States of America, every year. "I realised that being a doctor is a lot more work than I initially thought. Instead, I want to find a balance between both," said Hegde. "I always want to do new things. So, I thought I'll just give it a try. It helped that I had a mother who is keener than me that I should do what I want to do," said Hegde. —*PTI*

BJP's Manikanth Rathod arrested in rice theft case

KALABURAGI, 17 JULY

A BJP leader Manikanth Rathod has been arrested in connection with theft of rice meant for Anna Bhagya scheme that offers 10 kg food grains to each member of the family belonging to the economically weaker sections every month, police said on Wednesday. The Shahapur police arrested Rathod from his residence in the district headquarter town of Kalaburagi. "Manikanth has been arrested in connection with the theft of 6,077 quintals of rice worth more than Rs 2 crore from a government warehouse in Shahapur in Yadgir district," the sources said. The BJP leader was summoned by the police to appear before it for questioning, which he ignored due to which he was arrested. Rathod had contested the 2023 Assembly election on BJP ticket against Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge's son Priyank Kharge and lost. —*PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Railway works in coastal area will be expedited: Minister

MANGALURU, 17 JULY

Union Minister of State for Railways V Somanna on Wednesday assured that several pending railway development works in coastal State will be expedited. A high-level meeting of stakeholders will be soon convened with the Union Minister of Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw, he said. He arrived in Mangaluru today to review the progress of railway development projects, and spoke to reporters after visiting Mangaluru Central Station. "For the last 40 years, the railway development in Mangaluru has been stagnant, and action will be taken to revive it. Railway development works in the Mangaluru, and Karwar sections that have connectivity to Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Goa, and Maharashtra have not been developed as expected. In this regard, experts, people's representatives, and officials will be brought together within two months to prepare a blueprint. Senior officials of the Railway Department briefed the Minister about the development works on the coast. The coordination between the officials and people's representatives was found lacking, they said. —*PTI*

JOB QUOTA MOVE A CAUSE OF CONCERN FOR MIGRANTS

Many non-Kannadigas who made Bengaluru their home are now puzzled

The technology sector has been crucial to Karnataka's economic and social development, with Bengaluru known globally as India's Silicon Valley PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

BENGALURU, 17 JULY

State government's plan to reserve jobs in the private sector for Kannadigas has sparked serious concerns among people from other states working in Bengaluru.

Salar News spoke to a cross-section of those to gather their response. Ryan Arulnathan completed his BE in Artificial Intelligence from southern Tamil Nadu and has been working with a private company in Manyata Tech Park.

"With Karnataka's move to privatise the private sector, I am scared for my future. I appeal to the government to keep a quota for outsiders as well," Arulnathan said.

S Pradeep, a paying guest owner in Nagawara, shared his worries. "All of my tenants are from the North East, North India, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, and most of them work at Manyata Tech Park. They are discussing this issue in hushed tones, fearing they might have to move out."

Many non-Kannadigas have made Bengaluru their home, with their children studying in local schools. Hailing from Mizoram, a staff nurse at a private hospital in Yelahanka who did not wish to be named, has been staying in Bengaluru for 13 years.

"If this reservation is implemented, where do we go? Our children study here and we speak fluent Kannada. Some children from our state attend government schools here; this is their home," the nurse said.

Sourabh M, a techie from Madhya Pradesh employed at Bagmane Tech Park in the City, voiced his concerns about discrimination in the tech industry.

"I arrived in Bengaluru three years ago and have made this City my home. I brought my wife here and if the State government implements this move, then my whole life will be disrupted. I have to then start life from scratch. I will have to start over. I was keen to learn Kannada and have already learned the basics."

A front office manager from Uttar Pradesh, employed at a star hotel in Central Bengaluru, has been here in the City for over a decade with his family. Many of us would otherwise go jobless and homeless. This city is my home too," the manager said.

—*Salar News*

CM deletes '100% Kannadiga reservation' post

Bengaluru, 17 July

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday deleted his post on 'X' about '100 per cent reservation for Kannadigas' in private sector jobs. He posted another message on the social media platform stating that the Cabinet approved the bill to fix 50 per cent reservation for administrative posts and 75 per cent for non-administrative posts for Kannadigas in private industries and other organisations in the state. "Apparently he corrected his message," a source said. —*PTI*

Job quota bill will force firms to relocate: Nasscom

BENGALURU, 17 JULY

National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) on Wednesday expressed disappointment and concern over State's new bill mandating reservation for locals in private sector jobs.

"Restrictions could force companies to relocate as local skilled talent becomes scarce," it cautioned.

Karnataka State Employment of Local Industries Factories Establishment Act Bill, 2024 states that private firms should recruit Kannadigas in Group C and D category posts.

Also, it requires private firms to give priority to local candidates in the jobs.

NASSCOM is an Indian non-governmental trade association and advocacy group that primarily serves the Indian technology industry.

The association noted that the tech sector contributes 25 per cent of the State's Gross Domestic Product, houses a quarter of the country's digital talent, over 11, 000 start-ups and 30 per cent of the total Global Capacity Centres.

In today's highly competitive landscape, knowledge-led businesses will locate where talent is available and attracting skilled workers is crucial for success, it pointed out.

Globally, there is a huge shortage for skilled talent and Karnataka despite the large pool, is no exception. The technology sector has been crucial to Karnataka's economic and social development, with Bengaluru known globally as India's Silicon Valley.

"The bill's provisions threaten to reverse this progress, drive away companies, and stifle startups, especially when more global firms (GCCs) are looking to invest in the State." The association said it is seeking an urgent meeting for industry representatives with State authorities to raise concerns and prevent the progress from being derailed.

—*PTI*

DK Shivakumar PHOTO: PTI

Shivakumar denies charges in garbage disposal tender

BENGALURU, 17 JULY

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, has denied accusations regarding the issuance of contracts to blacklisted companies for solid waste management in City.

Addressing the media at his Sadashivanagar residence, Shivakumar said, "The landfills on the outskirts of the City have not been identified yet. Then how can we issue contracts to companies to manage solid waste, let alone blacklisted companies."

When questioned about awarding solid waste management contracts worth Rs 94,000 crore over 30 years years to blacklisted companies, he responded, "A union minister has alleged that I have taken a bribe of Rs. 15,000 crore to issue contracts for solid waste management. The media has reported it too, but it is completely baseless."

"We are struggling to identify lands for landfills. Without landfills, where is the question of giving contracts to any firm?" he asserted, mentioning that the situation is further complicated by a court case that has halted waste disposal at Mandur for the past three days.

Shivakumar highlighted the search for alternative sites and ongoing discussions with the Nice organisation as potential solutions. "We visited a few other states to study how the landfill system works. We will talk to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and place it before Cabinet," he said.

—*Salar News with agencies*

ED grills Nagendra's wife in Valmiki scam

BENGALURU, 17 JULY

Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday questioned former minister B Nagendra's wife in the Rs 187 crore scam in a State-owned corporation here. The ED sleuths summoned Manjula for interrogation in the alleged financial irregularities in the Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation. Nagendra, a Congress MLA, is already in the ED custody.

The alleged illegal money transfer scam involving the Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation Ltd came to light after its accounts superintendent, Chandra shekhar P, died by suicide on 26 May, leaving behind a note.

The note revealed the unauthorised transfer of Rs 187 crore belonging to the Corporation from its bank account, and said that out of

PHOTO:X/@BNAGENDRAINC

the sum, Rs 88.62 crore was illegally moved to various accounts allegedly belonging to 'well-known' IT companies and a Hyderabad-based cooperative bank among others.

Scheduled Tribes Welfare Minister B Nagendra tendered his resignation on June 6 after allegations were made against him in connection with the scam. ED, which joined the probe after the Union Bank of India lodged a complaint had previously raided Nagendra and Valmiki Corporation Chairman Basanagouda Daddal. —*PTI*

DOCS TREAT IRAQI MAN WITH 11CM ABDOMINAL BULGE

BENGALURU, 17 JULY

A 59-year-old Iraqi man with 11cm large abdominal aneurysm (a swelling in aorta) was treated by City doctors of Sakra World Hospital, on Wednesday.

Following a comprehensive diagnosis, an exceptionally large size aneurysm in his abdomen was revealed. He was suffering from ischemic heart disease and hypertension for the last eight years.

The man underwent a procedure known as "total endovascular abdominal aortic aneurysm repair. The technique involves a small groin incision to introduce a stent graft, guided to the aneurysm site via the femoral artery.

The patient received successful treatment along with essential support, resulting in a improvement in his health. He was discharged within 24 hours and is in stable condition. —*Salar News*

Red alert in coastal Karnataka; search ops on in Uttara Kannada

BENGALURU/SIRSI, 17 JULY

With the rains not letting up and the monsoon still vigorous, the India Meteorological Department has extended the red alert for coastal State till 18 July.

Since the intensity of rain has reduced in south interior State, the weather department has retracted the red alert for the region and has issued an orange one till 20 July.

Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner of Uttara Kannada Laxmipriya said that due to the relentless rain, the district had opened 26 care centres on 16 July, including six in Karwar taluk, six in Kumta and 14 in Honnavar, sheltering 2,368 people.

According to her, in the last 24 hours, three houses were completely damaged, one severely and 18 partially, and one human life was lost due to a house collapse in Karwar taluk.

Red alert in coastal State is issued till 18 July PHOTO: PTI

Search ops on in Uttara Kannada landslide site

Search and rescue operations resumed on Wednesday morning in Shirur village in Uttara Kannada district, where a massive landslide claimed the lives of four people a day ago.

Vehicular traffic has been temporarily suspended on National Highway 66, where the incident occurred, officials said. A team of National Disaster Response Force, fire and emergency services and officials of other agencies amid rains, recovered four bodies. The four dead were members of the same family, who ran an eatery along the highway. —*PTI/Salar News*

HELPLINE

- Helpline number: 1077
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GT MALL IN CITY

Mall says no to dhoti-clad farmer, faces ire

BENGALURU, 17 JULY

A 70-year-old farmer was denied entry at GT Mall for wearing a traditional dhoti and shirt. The incident occurred around 6pm on Tuesday, when Nagaraj from Haveri, along with his father, went to GT Mall on Magadi Road to watch a movie.

Karnataka Rakshana Vedike and a pro-Kannada organisation honored the farmer as an apology and protested in front of the mall on Wednesday.

In a viral video on social media, security guard said, "We have certain rules to follow if you want to make a video of my statement go ahead but I'm working as I'm instructed."

However, the mall owner has apologised to the public and stated that it was a misunderstanding and that we had suspended the security guard as we did not intend to hurt the feelings of anyone. Taking it to X, Labour Minister Santosh Lad commented, "Siddaramaiah has been ruling the State for seven years as Chief Minister wearing a dhoti. We will write to our department or the police department in this regard."

Various Kannada organisation members protested in front of GT World Mall, against the management for denying entry to the farmer as he was wearing a dhoti in Bengaluru, on Wednesday PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD/SALAR

Agriculture Minister Cheluvarayaswamy stated that the government would try to frame appropriate rules in this regard. "We condemn this. I will discuss with the CM about bringing rules from the government."

Speaking to **Salar News**, Kuruburu Shanthakumar, the farmer's association State President said, "Apology to the farmer is not enough and we need the statement on why it happened and why nobody in the premises acknowledged this act. Everyone was quiet because the rules exist and we need a statement from the mall authorities or hundreds of farmers from the State would protest at mall."

Karnataka State Human Rights Commission (KSHRC) to issue a notice seeking clarification on conduct of mall administration. —*Salar News*

Rakshit Shetty to fight copyright case in court

BENGALURU, 17 JULY

Reacting to the copyright infringement FIR filed against actor-filmmaker Rakshit Shetty, Paramvah Studios has issued an open letter on its Instagram page stating that the production house has decided to fight the case in court.

The case was filed by MRT Music alleging that the production house had used two songs owned by it without any authorisation in the film 'Bachelor Party'.

Paramvah Studios was floated by Shetty, who was named in the FIR.

The police said on 15 July that the complaint was filed against Shetty and his production house by Naveen Kumar, who is a partner at MRT Music, at Yeswanthpur police station, alleging that two songs — 'Gaalimathu' and 'Nyaya Ellide' — were used in the comedy film without obtaining permission.

A notice has been sent to the actor, police added.

In the FIR, the complainant had alleged that Shetty used

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

these songs in violation of The Copyright Act without purchasing broadcast and ownership rights.

He also alleged that discussions were held between the two parties in January about using these songs but they were unsuccessful.

"We had previously spoken with MRT before the 'Bachelor Party' movie's release, but the price quoted was beyond our budget and not open for negotiation," letter stated.

—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Former Sikkim minister's body found in WB canal

GANGTOK, 17 JULY

The body of former Sikkim minister RC Poudyal was found in a canal near Siliguri in West Bengal nine days after he went missing, police said on Wednesday.

The body of Poudyal, 80, was found floating in the Teesta Canal at Fulbari on Tuesday, they said.

"Prima facie, it is suspected that the body might have been brought down by the Teesta river from upstream. The identification was made through the watch and the clothes he was wearing," a police officer said.

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) was constituted to search for the veteran politician after he went missing on 7 July from Chota Singtam in Pakyong district, police said.

"The investigation into the death will continue," the officer said.

—PTI

Atiq's property worth ₹50cr transferred to govt

PRAYAGRAJ, 17 JULY

Slain gangster-turned-politician Atiq Ahmed's property worth about Rs 50 crore, allegedly brought using money earned from criminal activities, has been transferred to the government.

District Government Advocate (Criminal) Gulab Chandra Agrahari said Atiq had bought 2.377 hectares of land in the name of a mason Hoobalal from the earnings of crime. While registering the land in the name of Hoobalal, Atiq had said that if needed, he would get the land registered in his name. Agrahari said this property was attached by the Police Commissioner Court under Section 14 (1) of the Gangsters Act and three months were given to file a reply. But no evidence was presented by the party concerned as proof of ownership of the land. *—PTI*

SKM leaders urge MPs to raise their demands in Parl

NEW DELHI, 17 JULY

Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) leaders met several Parliament members on Wednesday and urged them to raise the demands of farmer outfits in Parliament including Minimum Support Price on "C2 plus 50 per cent formula" with procurement for all crops and farm loan waiver. The SKM, which spearheaded the 2020-21 farmers' stir at Delhi borders against three central agri laws, had announced last week that it would restart its agitation that was suspended in December 2021.The handing over of charters of their demands to MPs was the first in the string of protests planned for the coming days, it said. *—PTI*

4 detained in VIP chief's father murder in Bihar

DARBHANGA/PATNA, 17 JULY

Bihar Police have detained four persons for questioning in connection with its probe into the murder of Jitan Sahni, father of Vikassheel Insaan Party (VIP) chief Mukesh Sahni. A statement issued by Darbhanga Police said, "Analysis of the CCTV footage has revealed that these four persons entered the house of Jitan Sahni around 10.30 pm on 15 July and stayed there for half an hour."Former state minister Mukesh Sahni's 70-year-old father was found stabbed to death at his home in Darbhanga district on 16 July. "Investigators are analysing call detail records of all the four detained persons, their history and also the purpose of visiting the victim's house on Monday night. Other information about the detained persons is also being collected from the villagers," the statement added. *—PTI*

J&K terror: Protesters demand 'Operation All Out'

The locals call for rooting out of terrorim in J&K

JAMMU, 17 JULY

Several parts of the Jammu region witnessed protests on Wednesday following the killing of four Army personnel in an encounter with the terrorists in Doda district and demanded the launch of 'Operation All Out' for a robust government response.

Led by Rashtriya Bajrang Dal Chief Rakesh Kumar, the activists rallied against the killings and Pakistan's alleged support for terrorism in the region. They burned effigies and chanted slogans condemning Pakistan.

"We strongly condemn this cowardly act. The government must launch 'Operation All Out' to eliminate foreign mercenaries targeting army personnel and civilians," Kumar told reporters here.

The encounter, which began on Monday evening, marked the third major clash between the security forces and terrorists in the forests of Doda district in the past three weeks. Captain Brijesh Thapa, Naik D Rajesh, Sepoy Bijendra and Sepoy Ajay lost their lives in the encounter.

In Samba and Rajouri districts, Congress and Youth Congress units respectively staged anti-Pakistan protests, urging the government to initiate decisive anti-terrorism operations and restore confidence among the local population. They demanded assurances for the safety of minorities in the Valley. In Doda and Bhaderwah, the traders and civil society members also held similar protests.

They also advocated for equipping village defence groups with modern weapons to protect remote hamlets in the Jammu hills.

—PTI

Members of Rashtriya Bajrang Dal burn an effigy during a protest against the terror attack in J&K's Doda on Wednesday **PHOTO: PTI**

Darjeeling MP Raju Bista pays tribute to the mortal remains of martyred Army captain Brijesh Thapa who was killed in a terrorist encounter in J&K on Thursday; Family mourns as the mortal remains of martyred Sepoy Bijendra Singh arrives in Jhunjhunu. Sepoy Ajay Singh's body was also cremated with full honours **PHOTO: PTI**

4 NCP leaders return to Sharad Pawar faction

PUNE, 17 JULY

Several Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leaders and corporators returned to the Sharad Pawar camp a day after resigning from the Ajit Pawar faction on Wednesday.

At Sharad's residence in Pune, the former NCP's Pimpri-Chinchwad unit chief, Ajit Gavhane, was among the leaders who joined his faction.

Three other senior leaders of the NCP's Pimpri-Chinchwad unit--Rahul Bhosale, Pankaj Bhalekar, and Yash Sane--who quit the party on Tuesday also joined the founder's camp.

In reaction to this, NCP (Sharad faction) working President Supriya Sule said that Sharad has been working for development in Maharashtra and at the Centre for the last 60 years, and even people from the Opposition look at him with great hope.

Earlier in the day, Gavhane said that he, along with some other party workers who have also resigned from their posts, will be seeking blessings from NCP founder Sharad Pawar.

—ANI

PHOTO: PTI

RSS blames NCP for BJP's poor show in LS polls in Maharashtra

MUMBAI, 17 JULY

A Marathi weekly linked to the RSS has sought to blame NCP for BJP's poor performance in the Lok Sabha elections, stating that public sentiments completely went against BJP after it joined hands with the Ajit Pawar-led outfit. It added that the unrest among the party cadre was just the "tip of the iceberg". *—PTI*

Muslim population in Assam now 40%: Himanta

RANCHI, 17 JULY

Assam Chief Minister Himant Biswa Sarma on Wednesday claimed that the Muslim population in his state has now risen to 40 per cent, contending that demographic change is a "big issue" in the northeastern state.

Sarma, who is also BJP's Jharkhand election co-in charge, made the comments on the sidelines of a party meeting here. "In Assam Muslims population was 12 per cent in 1951. " he said. Earlier he alleged that the number of Bangladeshi infiltrators is rising in tribal areas of Jharkhand. BJP would include a strong action plan against infiltrators in its manifesto for the upcoming Jharkhand Assembly election, he said. *–PTI*

End 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas', says BJP's Suvendu

KOLKATA, 17 JULY

Senior BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari on Wednesday attributed the party's poor performance in Lok Sabha polls in West Bengal to lack of support from the minority community.

Addressing the extended session of BJP's state executive committee, Adhikari dismissed the need for a Minority Morcha of the party. While addressing the session, Adhikari said, "I have spoken for nationalist Muslims as well. We all used to say 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas', but I would not say this anymore because I think it should be 'Hum unke saath jo humare saath' (we are with those who are with us)... no need for Minority Morcha." *–PTI*

Law ministry pitches for sunset clause in bills

NEW DELHI, 17 JULY

The law ministry has pitched for the incorporation of a "sunset" clause or automatic repeal provision in certain type of bills to de-clutter statute books and has put it in its 100-day agenda.

The sunset clause applies primarily to laws of temporary nature or those dealing with dynamic situations.

Once their utility ends, they stand removed from the statute books.

The legislative department in the ministry has made "sunset clause" in new legislative proposal a part of its 100-day agenda, saying steps will be taken in this regard in consultation with concerned ministries.

- Ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had directed all union ministries and departments to draw up a 100-day agenda for the next government

Ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had directed all union ministries and departments to draw up a 100-day agenda for the next government.

Former Union law secretary PK Malhotra explained that whenever the legislature -- Parliament or state legislature -- want to restrict the life of a legislation being passed by it, it may as a matter of policy provide a sunset clause providing that after a lapse of a certain period -- five or 10 years depending on the requirement -- the law will come to an end.

The legislature can pass a fresh law giving the statute, which has become inoperative due to the sunset clause, a fresh lease of life, Malhotra told PTI.

According to the legislative department, it seeks to incorporate sunset clause or automatic repealing clause in new legislative proposal in consultation with administrative ministries and departments concerned.

—PTI

Naidu apprises HM of Andhra's financial crisis

NEW DELHI, 17 JULY

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Delhi on Tuesday and apprised him of the state's financial condition.

In a post on X after the meeting, Naidu said, "Today in New Delhi, I met with the Hon'ble Union Home Minister, Shri @AmitShahJi, to apprise him of the devastating condition of finances that Andhra Pradesh had slipped into over the past five years. Naidu added, "I also discussed the findings of the four White Papers released, outlining the staggering debt accumulated between FY 2019-24 that spiralled State's finances out of control. Economic incompetence, gross mismanagement, and rampant corruption by the previous government caused irreparable damage."

He claimed that forests were deforested under their administration. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

HC RESERVES ORDER ON KEJRI'S PLEAS CHALLENGING ARREST, SEEKING BAIL

NEW DELHI, 17 JULY

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday reserved the order on Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's plea challenging his arrest by Central Bureau Investigation (CBI) in connection with Excise policy case.

Justice Neena Bansal Krishna heard the arguments advanced by the lawyers of Kejriwal and the CBI and reserved its order on the petitions challenging his arrest and seeking interim bail in the corruption case.

Meanwhile the Court fixed 29 July, 2024 for hearing on regular bail plea moved by Arvind Kejriwal in the matter. Calling his arrest a "sham", Kejriwal's lawyer argued that CBI did not want to arrest him and had no material to take him into custody, and the sequence of events made it clear that he was arrested to ensure that he remained in prison.

Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, representing AAP national convenor, contended, "It is unfortunately an insurance arrest. I have effectively three release orders in my favour under very stringent provisions of the PMLA... These orders show that the man is entitled to be released."

—PTI

Hathras Baba back in ashram, says his lawyer

LUCKNOW, 17 JULY

Self-styled godman Surajpal alias Narayan Sakar Hari alias Bhole Baba, who held a satsang in Hathras recently where 121 devotees were killed after a stampede, has reached his ashram at Bahadur Nagar village in Kasganj, his lawyer said on Wednesday.

"He has reached his ashram and will stay here. He came here from his another ashram. He was never at anyone's place or any hotel or another country," Bhole Baba's lawyer A P Singh said.

Singh said that the village is Baba's 'janmasthali' (birthplace) and he last came here for a day in 2023.

The stampede at the 'satsang' of Bhole Baba claimed 121 lives in Sikandararu area of Hathras on 2 July.

The Uttar Pradesh government has constituted an SIT and a judicial commission to probe into the incident.

The SIT in its report submitted to the state government on 9 July did not rule out a "big conspiracy" behind the stampede. The report also flagged lapses on the part of the local administration that led to the stampede. The report held the organisers responsible for the incident, claiming they did not make arrangements to manage the crowd and also fixed the responsibility of administration, according to official sources. *—ANI*

PHOTO: PTI

Sena (UBT) jabs Shinde Sena over exclusion of minister in NITI Aayog

MUMBAI, 17 JULY

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Priyanka Chaturvedi on Wednesday took potshots at the rival Shiv Sena over its minister not finding a place in the reconstituted NITI Aayog.

"No place for Shinde Sena in the reconstituted NITI Ayog. When 'Niti' is only immoral power grab, can understand the exclusion," Rajya Sabha member Chaturvedi said in a post on X. The Narendra Modi-led NDA government on Tuesday reconstituted the NITI Aayog, with four full-time members and 15 union ministers, including from BJP allies, as either ex-officio members or special invitees.

Union Minister of State for AYUSH (Independent Charge) Prataprao Jadhav, did not find a place in the reconstituted committee. Jadhav belongs to the Shiv Sena led by Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, an ally of BJP.

—PTI

PHOTO: PTI

TELANGANA TO WAIVE CROP LOANS OF UP TO RS 1 LAKH

HYDERABAD, 17 JULY

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy made it clear on Tuesday that the farm loan waiver scheme of up to Rs 2 lakh will apply to every farmer family possessing a land passbook.

He said that the ration card is being used only for family identification. The total number of ration cards in the state is 90 lakh, while the number of farmer accounts with bank loans is only 70 lakh.

Reddy further clarified that 6.36 lakh farmers in the state who do not possess ration cards and took farm loans are also eligible for the farm loan waiver benefit.

Reddy said that the funds released by the government for the loan waiver scheme should be utilized only for farmers and not for personal or other loan waivers. He warned that action will be taken if the farm loan funds are diverted.

—PTI

PHOTO: PTI

IN HARYANA

10% quota for Agniveers in police

CHANDIGARH, 17 JULY

Months ahead of the assembly polls, Haryana's BJP government announced Wednesday a 10 per cent reservation for Agniveers in the recruitment of constables, forest guards and jail wardens, along with quotas in other posts.

Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini also said that the government will provide interest-free loans of up to Rs 5 lakh if any Agniveer wishes to set up their own business.

He said that in Group C and D posts, an age relaxation of three years will also be given. "However, for the first batch of Agniveers, this age relaxation will be five years," Saini added.

In direct recruitment for Group C civil posts, there will be a five per cent horizontal reservation for Agniveers, Saini added.

He also announced sops for industrial units employing Agniveers. *—PTI*

There will be a 5% horizontal reservation for Agniveers **PHOTO: PTI**

M'rashtra announces 'Ladka Bhau' Yojana for youths

NEW DELHI, 17 JULY

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Wednesday announced a job training and stipend scheme for youth, tentatively named 'Ladka Bhau' Yojana, days after it introduced a monthly financial assistance scheme for eligible women.

Shinde declared broad features of the new scheme, primarily targeting men, at Pandharpur in Solapur district on the occasion of Ashadhi Ekadashi.

"Some people said that 'Ladki Bahin Yojana' (for women) has been launched; what about 'Ladka Bhau' (beloved brother)? We are now announcing a scheme for Ladka Bhau where job seekers who are class 12 pass will receive Rs 6,000, diploma holders will get Rs 8,000, and those with a bachelor's degree will get Rs 10,000. They will receive this stipend from the government during their on-job training in the industry," Shinde told reporters.

The candidate will do the apprenticeship and get a job. Simultaneously, the industry will benefit from the trained manpower, he said, adding that the apprenticeship will be funded by the state government.

—PTI

Teen arrested in Delhi hospital shooting

NEW DELHI, 17 JULY

Delhi Police on Wednesday arrested one more accused, who was among the key conspirators in the GTB Hospital firing case, officials said. According to the officials, the mastermind behind the incident, Faheem, had kept the accused Moin, 19, as a backup plan in case the original plan failed. "Moin visited GTB Hospital many times before the shooting incident and collected details about its entry and exit gates," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Shahdara) Surendra Choudhary said. He conducted the recce for four continuous days along with associates Ayan, Aman and Shavez, who were inside the hospital at the time of the crime, he said. "Initially, Moin was tasked to hide the motorcycle used in the crime. Beside that Faheem kept him as the backup plan in case of failure of the original plan," the DCP said, adding that further investigation into the matter is underway. In a case of mistaken identity, 32-year-old Riyazuddin was shot dead by a teenager inside a ward of the GTB Hospital here on Sunday. *—PTI*

Toddler mauled to death by stray dogs in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD, 17 JULY

An 18-month-old boy died after allegedly being mauled by a pack of stray dogs in Jawahar Nagar near here, police said on Wednesday. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy expressed anguish over the boy's death and directed officials to take steps to prevent recurrence of such incidents in the future. The incident took place on Tuesday night when the child came out of his house. A dog dragged him to some distance and later some strays bit him resulting in injuries, they said. The boy was initially rushed to a private hospital and from there referred to a state-run hospital where he died last night, police said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Farmer activist Navdeep Singh walks out of jail

AMBALA, 17 JULY

Farmer activist Navdeep Singh walked out of Ambala Central Jail after the Punjab and Haryana High Court granted him bail in a case registered in connection with farmers' February 13 'Delhi Chalo' march. He was arrested by Haryana Police from Mohali on 28 March on various charges, including rioting and attempt to murder. He walked out of jail after almost four months on Tuesday evening. Earlier, farmer leaders had said that they would gherao the office of the Ambala superintendent of police on Wednesday and Thursday to protest against Navdeep Singh's arrest. However, they dropped the plan after his release. Farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher claimed on Wednesday that police had detained a few farmer leaders who had gone to Ambala to bring Navdeep Singh to the Shambhu border to honour him after his release from jail. "Our programme was to honour him. *—PTI*

Van fatally knocks down 5 devotees in TN

THANJAVUR, 17 JULY

Five devotees, including four women, on 'padayatra' were fatally knocked down by a speeding van along the Thanjavur-Tiruchirappalli national highway in the district early on Wednesday. According to police, the victims hailing from Pudukottai district were proceeding to Samayapuram Mariamman temple when the accident took place. The van heading to Tiruchirappalli mowed them down at Valambakudi village, 30 km from here, early this morning. One woman who sustained injuries has been admitted to Thanjavur government medical college hospital. *—PTI*

Kedarnath Temple head flays Shankaracharya

The chairman says he should prove the gold theft claim in court

DEHRADUN, 17 JULY

Badrinath-Kedarnath Temple Committee Chairman Ajendra Ajay on Wednesday said that Swami Avimukteshwaranand, Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath, who claimed that 228kg of gold was stolen from the Kedarnath Temple, should prove the claims in court.

Speaking to ANI, Ajay said that Swami Avimuktes hwaranand's statements regarding the disappearance of gold in Kedarnath Dham are unfortunate. He urged the Shankaracharya to present the facts. Ajay added that instead of making statements, Swami Avimukteshwaranand should approach the competent authority and demand an inquiry, or he can go to the Supreme Court or High Court and file a petition if he has evidence.

"I would like to request him, and also challenge him, to bring out the facts," Ajay said.

Shankaracharya Swami Avimukteshwaranand speaks to the media criticising the Temple construction in Delhi on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

The Temple Committee Chairman further mentioned that the Shankaracharya doesn't have the right to harm the dignity of Kedarnath Dham. He suggested that if Swami Avimukteshwaranand is acting to further a political agenda, it is very unfortunate.

"He doesn't have the right to hurt the dignity of Kedarnath Dham or create controversy over it. He is doing this just to protest, create controversies, and further the agenda of Congress, it is very unfortunate," Ajay added.

> **When politicians interfere in religion, you (media) hail them. When Modi ji comes to a temple and performs rituals you cover it live. Meanwhile, when Shankaracharyas speak on religion and temple, we are told that sanyasis aren't allowed to do it. When politicians stop interfering in religion, I will stop interfering in politics**
>
> —Swami Avimukteshwaranand, Shankaracharya of Jyotirmath

On Monday Swami Avimukteshwaranand said, "There is a gold scam in Kedarnath; why is that issue not raised? After doing a scam there, now Kedarnath will be built in Delhi? And then there will be another scam. Fold is missing from Kedarnath; no inquiry has started. Who is responsible for this?" *—ANI*

IN UP'S BAREILLY

Permission denied for mass marriages for Muslim converts

BAREILLY, 17 JULY

The programme proposed by local political group Ittehad-e-Millat Council (IMC) to conduct mass marriage of men and women of other religions who have converted to Islam has been "postponed" after the district administration denied permission for the event.

IMC chief Maulana Tauqeer Raza Khan, who had announced to organise the event, said, "We work within the ambit of the law. The mass marriage programme will be held only after the permission of the administration. We sought permission from the administration, which was not given. The programme will not be held without the permission of the administration."

IMC state in-charge Nadeem Qureshi said the city magistrate did not give permission to convert and perform the marriage of couples. As such, the programme has been postponed for now, he said. The IMC had sought permission from the district administration for the event but their request was denied on Tuesday evening. District Magistrate Ravindra Kumar said late on Tuesday night that the IMC had sought permission from the city magistrate to organise an event for religious conversion and marriage. "The permission for the same has not been given and the religious conversion and marriage programme has been postponed by IMC. The administration has received the letter from IMC informing about the postponement of the programme," the officer said.

—PTI

Vacancies at Mumbai airport trigger stampede-like situation

MUMBAI, 17 JULY

A stampede-like situation occurred near the Mumbai airport where thousands of job aspirants gathered to apply for a limited number of vacancies for the post of loader at the facility, police said on Wednesday.

The incident took place on Tuesday morning and the situation was later brought under control, an official from Sahar police station said. With their applications and documents in hand, the jobseekers assembled at gate no. 5 near the Sahar cargo complex after they came to know about the vacancy for the loader's post at the airport, he said.

As the situation went out of hand, the applicants were asked to submit their resumes, applications and other documents and then leave the spot. Later, the airport authorities decided to call 200 applicants for interview, the official said.

The salary of airport loaders ranges between Rs 20,000 to Rs 25,000 a month, but most make over Rs 30,000 after overtime allowances. Educational criteria for the job are basic, but the candidate must be physically strong. All the applicants were freshers and most of them had just passed Class 12. "No untoward incident was reported and the situation was later brought under control," the official said. *—PTI*

The airport authorities called 200 applicants for interview but at least 25,000 people turned up *PHOTO: X/SCREENGRAB*

Illegal structure razed near Khedkar's home after notice

PUNE, 17 JULY

An "illegal" structure near trainee IAS officer Puja Khedkar's family bungalow in Pune has been cleared, days after the civic body issued them a notice to remove it, an official said on Wednesday.

Khedkar's family might have got the alleged encroachment removed as the deadline set by the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) is not yet over, the official said.

The Pune civic body has not cleared the structure since the deadline is not yet over, the official said.

Khedkar is in the eye of a storm for allegedly misusing the disability and Other Backward Class (OBC) quota to secure a position in the IAS besides facing allegations of unwarranted conduct during her posting at the Pune collector's office.

Meanwhile, her parents Manorama and Dilip Khedkar remain untraceable, days after police registered an FIR against them over a video purportedly showing them threatening some persons with a gun following a land dispute in Mulshi tehsil of Pune district.

The two-minute-long video shows Manorama with a pistol, accompanied by her security guards, engaged in a heated argument with some people at Dhadwali village, an official had said. The incident concerned a land parcel bought by Dilip Khedkar, a retired Maharashtra government employee. Locals had claimed the Khedkars had encroached on the land of neighbouring farmers.

Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) in Pune initiated an inquiry on Wednesday against Dilip regarding unaccounted wealth. *—PTI/ANI*

MONSOON FURY CONTINUES

Clockwise from top left: An area is seen submerged in floodwater, in Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh on Wednesday; A villager tries to save his television from a flood affected area in Nagaon district, Assam. The flood situation continued to improve as water level across the state was receding on Wednesday; After heavy rains the authorities open Peringalkuth Dam in Pariyaram, Kannur district and IMD issues an orange alert in 8 districts in Kerala *PHOTOS: PTI/X*

3 militants killed, policemen injured in Assam encounter

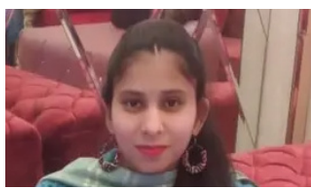
SILCHAR, 17 JULY

At least three suspected militants were killed and several police personnel were injured in a fierce encounter in Cachar district of Assam on Wednesday, officials said.

Though police have not made any official comment yet, a senior official at Assam Police Headquarters in Guwahati confirmed to PTI that three militants were neutralised in the encounter.

"Some of our personnel also sustained injuries. But we cannot immediately say the nature of injuries. We are yet to receive a report from the Cachar district police," he said. According to sources, police arrested three militants, whose affiliations are yet to be made public, from East Dholai Ganganagar on Tuesday night. "Police seized one AK-47 rifle, one pistol and other arms from the autorickshaw in which they were travelling. A police team took the trio to Bhaban Hills area today morning in search of other rebels. At that time, the encounter happened," they added. According to a source, three militants were killed in the gunfight, which lasted more than an hour, while three policemen also sustained bullet injuries. "All the injured have been admitted to Silchar Medical College and Hospital for treatment," he added. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI



Axis Bank staff ends life, suicide note says harrased

NOIDA/GHAZIABAD, 17 JULY

A 27-year-old private firm executive has ended her life allegedly due to physical and mental harassment by her colleagues, prompting the Ghaziabad police to launch an investigation into the matter, officials said on Wednesday.

The woman, who lived in Ghaziabad and worked at the firm located in Noida, was allegedly being harassed for the past five-six months, her family claimed. After the woman killed herself on July 12 allegedly by consuming poison, her brother approached the local Nandgram police station in Ghaziabad where an FIR was lodged under section 108 (abetment of suicide) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Alleging that his sister ended her life due to physical and mental harassment, he said "these people are responsible for her suicide". *—PTI*

Andhra gang rape: Teens tried to enact what they saw in porn

NANDYAL, 17 JULY

Andhra Pradesh Police arrested two male relatives of one of the three minor boys who allegedly gang-raped a nine-year-old girl here and dumped her body in a canal, said an official on Tuesday.

The three minor boys, accused of allegedly gang-raping and killing of the girl, had watched porn videos on mobile and tried to recreate the sexual assault on the victim, police said according to report. On 7 July, the boys allegedly raped the girl and then pushed her into the Mucchumarri Lift Irrigation Canal in Mucchumarri village. She was last seen playing at a park in the village. Newly appointed Nandyal superintendent of police Adhiraj Singh Rana said the father and uncle of one of the boys were arrested for concealing and destroying evidence. *—PTI*

FOR THE FIRST TIME

CAPF, dog squad in Paris for Olympics security

NEW DELHI, 17 JULY

Ten specially-trained Indian Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) and special commando force dogs are in France to provide a counter-terrorist and anti-sabotage security cover to various venues of the Paris Olympics slated to open next week, official sources said on Wednesday.

The ten Indian K9 (canine) teams will undertake sniffing and patrolling duties at various venues that will hold events for the Paris Olympics. They have been given a special 10-week training for this first-ever kind of collaboration of canine squads between the Indian and the French government, a security officer told PTI.

The teams along with their handlers are drawn from CAPFs like the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) force apart from the federal contingency commando force National Security Guard (NSG) and the Assam Rifles.

CRPF dogs Vast and Denby along with their handlers in Paris, on Wednesday *Photo: PTI*

The dogs are from the ferocious-looking Belgian Malinois breed which undertake infantry patrol and anti-sabotage sniffer tasks to detect bombs, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and trouble makers in various internal security theatres of the country like anti-Naxal operations and counter-terrorist operations, he said.

The squad includes five-year-old CRPF canine Vast and three-year-old Denby. They have been chosen for this task after stringent tests conducted at the CRPF dog breeding and training school located on Taralu near Bengaluru, Karnataka, the second officer said. The Malinois, a litter of an Israeli male Malinois crossed with an American bitch, shot to fame when it was reported that the dogs assisted US special forces in sniffing out Osama Bin Laden's hideout in Abbottabad in Pakistan in 2011. *—PTI*

Child dies, 5 others injured in electrocution during Muharram

GONDA, 17 JULY

A 12-year-old child was killed on Wednesday and five others injured in separate incidents of electrocution during the Tazia procession in Uttar Pradesh, police said.

In Tarabganj area at about 1 pm, a Tazia procession came in contact with a high-tension wire due to which Ashraf, 12, and Riyasat sustained burn injuries. They were rushed to a medical college, where Ashraf was declared dead.

In a separate incident in Telianpurwa village, four people, were injured in a similar incident as the Tazia came in contact with an electricity line.

14 injured due to electrocution in Bihar

At least 14 people were injured due to electrocution during a Muharram procession in Pipra Bijwara area in Bihar's Araria district on Wednesday, police said.

All the injured were part of the procession. "People have been admitted in the Araria district hospital, the rest were discharged," a police said.

In Patna a grocery shop owner was beaten, while a group of police personnel were attacked in Muzaffarpur after clashes broke out during Muharram procession.

Reportedly, the shop owner alleged that the attackers intended to loot his shop. The clash resulted in stone-pelting and injuries to some police officers.

In a separate incident at least 400 people started vomiting and having diarrhoea after drinking sharbat in Rajasthan during the procession.

—PTI with Agencies

TIGER CUBS RESCUED

In a heart-warming gesture, a special single-coach AC train was operated from Bhopal to transport two injured tiger cubs from the Midghat section near Budhni in Madhya Pradesh's Sehore district. West Central Railway operated the train after tiger cubs were struck by a train in the forested area in Midghat, located 70 km from Bhopal. One of the cubs, a nearly nine-month-old male, succumbed to injuries near the railway track. The hind legs of both the rescued cubs are currently non-functional due to the effects of tranquillising drugs. ***PHOTO: PTI***

Rly rescues 84K children in last 7 yrs from trafficking

During 2022, the RPF's unwavering commitment was evident as they rescued 17,756 children, the highest in the recorded period ***PHOTO: RPF***

RPF has during last seven years rescued 84,119 children, who were at risk in stations and trains, preventing them from falling into wrong hands, a press statement from Railway Ministry said.

Railway Protection Force (RPF) has over the past seven years been at the forefront of an operation named "Nanhe Faristey" – a mission dedicated to rescuing children in need of care and protection across various Indian Railway Zones, according to the ministry.

"During last seven years (2018- May 2024), the RPF has rescued 84,119 children who were at risk in stations and trains, preventing them from falling into harm's way," the ministry said.

"Nanhe Farishtey is more than just an operation; it is a lifeline for thousands of children who find themselves in precarious situations. The data from 2018 to 2024 illustrates a story of unwavering dedication, adaptability, and resilience. Each rescue is a testament to the RPF's commitment to safeguarding the most vulnerable members of society," it added.

Giving year wise data, the ministry said the year 2018 marked a significant start for "Operation Nanhe Farishtey" and in this year, the RPF rescued a total of 17,112 children, including both boys and girls.

"Out of 17,112 children rescued, 13,187 were identified as runaway children, an alarming number of 2105 were found to be missing, 1091 children as left behind, 400 as destitute, 87 as kidnapped, 78 as mentally challenged and 131 as street children. This year 2018 set a strong foundation for the operation, highlighting the urgent need for such an initiative," the ministry said.

"During 2019, the RPF's efforts continued to bear fruit, with a total of 15,932 children, including both boys and girls were rescued. Out of 15,932 children rescued, 12,708 as runaway children, 1454 as missing, 1036 children as left behind, 350 as destitute, 56 as kidnapped, 123 as mentally challenged and 171 as street children. The consistent numbers showcased the persistent issue of children running away and needing protection," it added.

According to the ministry, the year 2020 was challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted normal life and significantly impacted the operations.

Despite these challenges, the RPF managed to rescue 5,011 children, it added.

"During 2021, the RPF saw resurgence in their rescue operations, saving 11,907 children. This year saw a notable increase in the number of children found and protected, with 9601 children identified as runaways, 961 as missing, 648 as left behind, 370 as destitute, 78 as kidnapped, 82 as mentally challenged and 123 as street children," the ministry said.

Lauding the RPF, the ministry stated that during 2022, the RPF's unwavering commitment was evident as they rescued 17,756 children, the highest in the recorded period.

It said, "This year saw a significant number of runaways and missing children being found and given the necessary care and protection. 14,603 children were identified as runaways, 1156 as missing, 1035 as left behind, 384 as destitute, 161 as kidnapped, 86 as mentally challenged and 212 as street children. The efforts were bolstered by increased awareness and more coordinated operations across the railway zones."

"During the year 2023, RPF managed to rescue 11,794 children. With 8916 children rescued as runaways, 986 as missing, 1055 as left behind, 236 as destitute, 156 as kidnapped, 112 as mentally challenged and 237 children as street children, the RPF continued to play a crucial role in ensuring the safety and well-being of vulnerable children," it added.

Highlighting the persistent issues of child runaways and the dedicated efforts of the RPF to address them, the ministry maintained that in the first five months of 2024, the RPF has already rescued 4,607 children.

"With 3430 children rescued as runaways, the early trends suggest a continued commitment to the operation "Nanhe Farishtey"," the ministry said.

It added, "Through their efforts, the RPF has not only rescued children but also raised awareness about the plight of runaway and missing children, prompting further action and support from various stakeholders. The operation continues to evolve, adapting to new challenges and striving to create a safer environment for children across India's vast railway network."

Informing the initiatives of the Indian Railways, the ministry said, "Track Child Portal contains comprehensive details about aggrieved children. Indian Railway has established child helpdesks at over 135 railway stations. When a child is rescued by the Railway Protection Force (RPF), they are handed over to the District Child Welfare Committee which hands over the child to parents." *—PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

Covid-19 linked to symptoms of type 1 diabetes in children

Symptoms of type 1 diabetes are unusual thirst and hunger, along with frequent urination and blurred vision ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

Contracting Covid-19 may accelerate the onset of visible symptoms of type 1 diabetes in children, an autoimmune condition, according to a study published in Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA).

Researchers found that children infected with the virus and in the early stages of type 1 diabetes without displaying symptoms, progressed more rapidly to a clinical onset of the autoimmune disorder.

Symptoms of type 1 diabetes can include unusual thirst and hunger, along with frequent urination, fatigue and blurred vision. Treatment typically involves insulin therapy, requiring regular injections through the day.

In an autoimmune disorder, the body's immune system attacks the healthy cells and organs, instead of protecting it against foreign disease-causing agents.

Previous studies have found elevated levels of islet autoantibodies in children infected with Covid-19. Produced when insulin-producing cells in the pancreas are damaged, these autoantibodies from one's blood samples can help in diagnosing type 1 diabetes.

In this study, the researchers, including those from the Institute of Diabetes Research, Helmholtz Munich, Germany, found that children already having islet autoantibodies (early stages of type 1 diabetes) developed diagnosable symptoms of the condition at a faster rate after a Covid-19 infection, compared to those not infected.

Fifty-seven of 358 participants (15.9 per cent) progressed to clinical type 1 diabetes before the pandemic, while 113 of 396 (28.5 per cent) did so after the pandemic began. The incidence of clinical type 1 diabetes was 6.4 per 100 person-years prepandemic and 12.1 per 100 after March 2020.

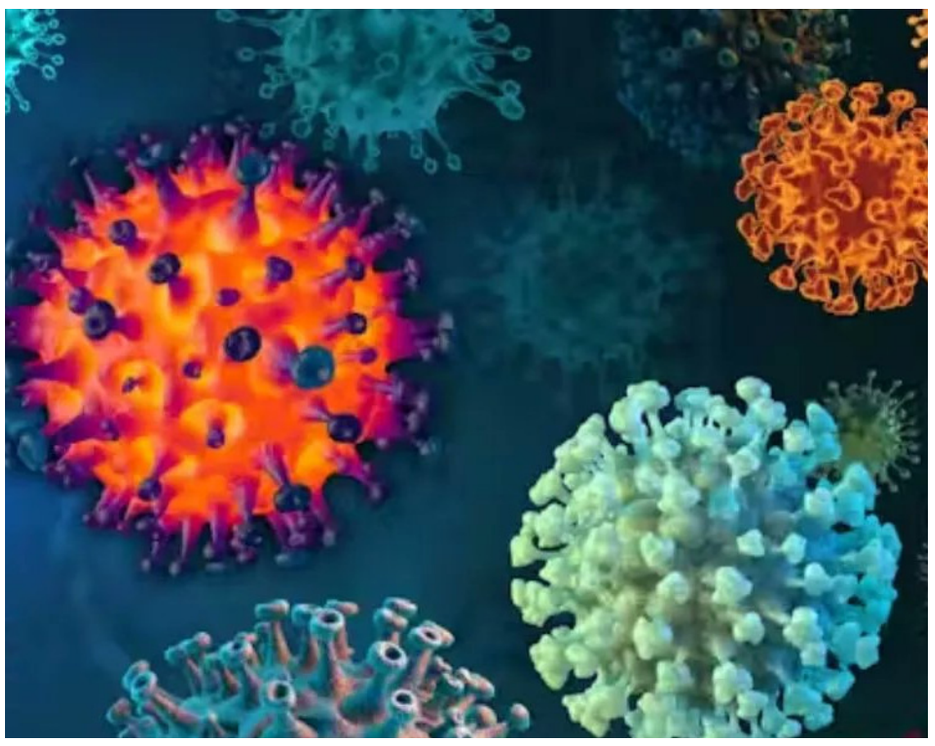
- Of the 353 participants with Covid-19 information, 236 (66.9 per cent) were infected

Of the 353 participants with Covid-19 information, 236 (66.9 per cent) were infected. Type 1 diabetes incidence was 8.6 per 100 person-years during, versus before, the pandemic among uninfected participants and 14.0 among the infected. The rate of type 1 diabetes was 15.3 among participants with a parent-reported infection and 13.7 among those who had SARS-CoV-2 antibodies but no report of infection.

The results "demonstrated that the Covid-19 pandemic was associated with an accelerated progression to clinical disease and that this acceleration was confined to those with Covid-19," the researchers concluded. "Further studies are required to determine whether Covid-19 also accelerates progression to type 1 diabetes in adults and whether vaccination and monitoring for Covid-19 symptoms should be considered for individuals with presymptomatic type 1 diabetes."

From the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 until 2023, children participating in the Fr1da study (for type 1 diabetes) were tested for antibodies produced in response to Covid-19, along with islet autoantibodies. The researchers thus had "valuable data" on the association between the SARS-CoV-2 virus and type 1 diabetes.

They showed that cases of type 1 diabetes diagnoses among children in early stages of the disease increased at a higher rate, compared to pre-pandemic. *—PTI*



In an autoimmune disorder, the body's immune system attacks the healthy cells and organs instead of protecting it against foreign disease-causing agents ***PHOTO: UNSPLASH***

Gaza man with Down Syndrome attacked by IDF dog & left to die

Israel's Defence Force unleashed their dog on Muhammed Bhar ***PHOTO: BBC NEWS***

There was always his family. When he was bullied at school, and beaten, they were there to embrace him when he came home. And when the war started and he was terrorised by the sound of bombs falling, someone always said things were going to be ok.

Muhammed was heavy and found movement difficult. He spent his days sitting in an armchair. If he needed anything, there was a niece or nephew to help.

Muhammed Bhar was 24 and had Down's syndrome and autism. His mother, Nabila Bhar, 70, told BBC: "He didn't know how to eat, drink, or change his clothes. I'm the one who changed his nappies. I'm the one who fed him. He didn't know how to do anything by himself."

On 27 June the war came back to the Bhar family's neighbourhood and Muhammed's small world shrank further. Along with other residents of Shejaiya, east of Gaza City centre, Bhars were given orders to evacuate by Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

IDF was advancing into Shejaiya in pursuit of Hamas fighters fighting from tunnels and houses. But the Bhars were tired of moving.

In a weary tone, Nabila, who is a widow, reeled off the names of relatives' homes where they'd sought shelter.

"We evacuated around 15 times. We would go to Jibreel's place, but then there would be bombing at Jibreel's place. We would go to Haydar Square, but then there would be bombing at Haydar Square. We would go to Rimal, but then there would be bombing at Rimal. We would go to Shawa Square, but there would be bombing at Shawa Square."

The fighting intensified in the streets around them. They would hide in different parts of the house, often in the bathroom when shooting became especially intense.

For Muhammed war meant loud, violent sounds, the air vibrating with the concussion from shells exploding nearby. None of this could be explained to him.

"He would panic and say, 'I'm scared, scared'," Nabila remembers.

On 3 July, according to the family, IDF raided their home on Nazaz Street. Nabila says there were several dozen soldiers with a combat dog - animals used to find Hamas fighters, and check for booby traps and explosives.

At first she heard them "breaking in and smashing everything" before the soldiers and dog arrived in the room.

Referring to Muhammed, she says: "I told them, 'He's disabled, disabled. Have mercy on him, he's disabled. Keep the dog away from him.'"

"The dog attacked him, biting his chest and then his hand. Muhammed didn't speak, only muttering 'No, no, no.' The dog bit his arm and the blood was shed. I wanted to get to him but I couldn't. No-one could get to him, and he was patting the dog's head saying, 'enough my dear enough.' In the end, he relaxed his hand, and the dog started tearing at him while he was bleeding."

Around this point, says Nabila, the soldiers took the young man into another room, and away from the dog. They tried to treat his wounds.

A terrified Muhammed, who had always depended on his family for help, was now in the care of combat soldiers, who had come from streets where they'd been fighting close quarter battles with Hamas.

Muhammed's niece, Janna Bhar, 11, described how the family pleaded with soldiers to help him. "We told them Muhammed was not well, but they kept saying he was fine."

After several hours, it is not clear how many, the family was ordered at gunpoint to leave, leaving Muhammed behind with the soldiers. There were pleas and cries. Two of his brothers were arrested by the army. They have still not been released. The rest of the family found shelter in a bombed out building.

They returned a week later to a sight that haunts Muhammed's brother Jibreel. He produces his mobile phone and shows our cameraman a video of the scene.

Muhammed's body is lying on the floor. There is blood around him, and a tourniquet on his arm. This was most probably used to stop heavy bleeding from his upper arm. Jibreel points to gauze used to bandage a wound, and remarks on the blood that clotted after the tourniquet was applied.

"They were trying to stop the bleeding. Then they left him without stitches or care. Just these basic first aid measures. Of course, as you can see, Muhammed was dead for a period of time already because he was abandoned. We thought he wasn't at home."

It is not clear what exact injury caused Muhammed's death. Nor what happened to him in the time his family last saw him, and when his brother returned and filmed the dead young man on the floor. He was buried shortly after the family found him, in an alley between houses because it was too dangerous to take the corpse to the mortuary, or a graveyard. There was no post-mortem and no certificate of death.

The family is demanding an investigation but with fighting still going on, and so many dead, it is hard to be hopeful that will happen any time soon. In response to queries from the BBC the IDF said they were checking on the report.

Nabila is left with an image of her dead child that refuses to go away. "This scene I will never forget... I constantly see the dog tearing at him and his hand, and the blood pouring from his hand... It is always in front of my eyes, never leaving me for a moment. We couldn't save him, neither from them nor from the dog." *—BBC News*

PHOTO: YONHAP

Ex-CIA official charged with spying for S Korea

WASHINGTON DC, 17 JULY

A former CIA employee and senior official at the National Security Council has been charged with serving as a secret agent for South Korea's intelligence service, the US Justice Department said. Sue Mi Terry accepted luxury goods, including fancy handbags, and expensive dinners at sushi restaurants in exchange for advocating South Korean government positions during media appearances, sharing non-public information with intelligence officers and facilitating access for South Korean officials to US government officials, according to an indictment filed in federal court in Manhattan. Prosecutors say South Korean intelligence officers also covertly paid her more than USD 37,000 for a public policy program that Terry controlled. *—AP*

China tycoon Guo convicted in US over $1B scam

WASHINGTON DC, 17 JULY

Self-exiled Chinese businessman Guo Wengui has been convicted by a US court of defrauding his online followers in a billion-dollar scam. He was found guilty on 9 out of 12 criminal cases he faced, including racketeering, fraud and money laundering. Guo's sentencing has been scheduled for 19 November, when he could face decades behind bars. He has been in prison since his arrest in March 2023. He is a critic of the Chinese Communist Party and was an associate of Stephen Bannon, an ex-White House chief strategist under former president Donald Trump. Guo goes by several aliases, including Miles Guo, Miles Kwok and "Brother Seven". He was named as Ho Wan Kwok when he was indicted in 2023. *—PTI*

14 kids hospitalised after eating spicy chips in Japan

TOKYO, 17 JULY

Fourteen high school students in Tokyo were rushed to hospital after eating "super spicy" potato chips on Tuesday, police said. Around 30 students ate the crisps after one of them brought them to school, local media reported. Soon, some of them started complaining of nausea and acute pain around their mouth, prompting emergency calls to the fire department and police. The company that makes the snack, Isoyama Corp, put out a statement, apologising for "any inconvenience" to customers, and wished the students a swift recovery. The company website is full of warnings for those who may wish to try the crisps. *—BBC News*

Senator Bob found guilty in bribery scheme

WASHINGTON DC, 17 JULY

New Jersey Senator Bob Menendez has been found guilty on 16 cases tied to a scheme where he accepted bribes, including gold bars and a Mercedes-Benz, in exchange for helping foreign governments. A jury convicted Menendez of all charges after more than 12 hours of deliberation over 3 days. Trial lasted 9 weeks. Menendez formerly the head of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee now faces the prospect of decades in prison. Democratic lawmakers called on him to step down in light of his conviction. "Senator Menendez must now do what is right for his constituents, the Senate, and our country, and resign," said Democratic Senate Majority leader Chuck Schumer. "I never violated my public oath," he said outside the New York City courthouse on Tuesday. *—AP*

Armed man shot dead near Trump event

Knife-weilding Black man was shot 5 times; 2nd incident after assassination bid on Trump

WASHINGTON DC, 17 JULY

Police officers shot and killed a man wielding a knife near the secure zone of the Republican National Convention days after the attempt on Donald Trump's life, according to law enforcement sources.

The individual, described as a Black male in his early 20s in a post by talk show host Dan O'Donnell, was reportedly given CPR by responding officers after they discharged five bullets at 14th and Vliet in Milwaukee, according to Mirror US.

This shooting happened about a mile from the Fiserv Forum, the site for the RNC event, in a residential area. The incident happened just three days after the attempted assassination of Donald Trump at a Pennsylvania rally.

Eyewitness Victor Evans told the Mirror: "We were sitting out there and there was an altercation between two individuals.

"The police were sitting up in the parking lot, saw the altercations and came running out. They were saying 'drop the knife, drop the knife'.

"He never brandished a knife towards their way, nothing. They just let loose. They shot him like 20 times, and I promise you most of those entry wounds were in the back. "Within about 20 yards the guy turned around and looked shocked, because he didn't realise the police were behind him. When he turned back to face who he was arguing with, they shot him.

Images from a Columbus police body-worn camera shows an officer shooting dead a homeless Black man wielding a knife outside the Republican National Convention *PHOTO: Columbus Police*

> **Our message to illegal immigrants is also this; we will return you to your country of origin. Not because you're all bad people, but because you broke the law and the United States of America was founded on the rule of law**
>
> -Vivek Ramaswamy, former prez candidate

Secret Service agents and Homeland Security officials are said to be helping with the ongoing investigation. A witness said the man was fatally shot by officers when he "flashed his knife." No police officers were injured in the incident. Courtesy,

—Courtesy, The Mirror

Kennedy sorry over leaked call with Trump

PHOENIX (US), 17 JULY

Robert F Kennedy Jr apologised Tuesday after a video was posted online showing part of a private phone call between the independent presidential candidate and Republican former President Donald Trump. The video shows Kennedy listening on a speakerphone as Trump shares disproven claims about childhood vaccines, an issue that has helped Kennedy amass a loyal following among people who reject the consensus that the benefits of vaccines outweigh the risk of complications. *—AP*

Security upped weeks ago over Iran plot to kill Trump

WASHINGTON DC, 17 JULY

Protection for Donald Trump was boosted several weeks ago after US authorities learned of an Iranian plot to kill him, according to national security officials.

Officials say there is no known connection between the alleged Iranian plot and the assassination attempt on the former president on Saturday in Pennsylvania.

However, the disclosure that security had been tightened raises further questions over how Thomas Matthew Crooks, 20, was able to climb a building and get close enough to fire at Trump.

The US Secret Service and the Trump campaign were notified of the Iranian threat, and security was increased as a result, according to a US national security official.

The Iranian mission at the United Nations called the report "unsubstantiated and malicious". *—BBC News*

NIKKI HALEY ENDORSES TRUMP

Indian-American Republican leader Nikky Haley endorsed her former boss Donald Trump as the party's candidate for the presidential election, delivering the message of unity after their bitter rivalry during the presidential primary.

Haley, 52, unsuccessfully challenged Trump, 78, for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination and spent months sparring with the former president. But last week, she instructed her 97 delegates to vote for Trump at the convention as she called for unity in the party. Haley defended the former president's foreign policy record issues. Haley said under Trump, the US did not face the border disaster US is facing today. *—AP*

Priti to replace Sunak as UK Oppn Leader

LONDON, 17 JULY

Britain's former home secretary, Priti Patel, is expected to contest the Conservative Party leadership race to replace Rishi Sunak as Opposition Leader in the House of Commons.

According to UK media reports, the 52-year-old British Indian member of Parliament is considering throwing her hat in the ring after she won her Witham, Essex, seat with a comfortable margin even as her party suffered its worst defeat in the general election earlier this month.

Sunak, 44, had announced his resignation on 5 July as the Labour Party landslide win unfolded and will attend the State Opening of Parliament on Wednesday as interim Opposition Leader until the election process for his successor has been finalised by the powerful 1922 Committee of backbench Tory MPs.

"Priti has kept a low profile and done her best to support others, she feels colleagues also need time to digest the general election result and don't want posturing in the media from prospective candidates," 'The Daily Telegraph' quoted a source close to the senior Tory MP as saying.

Patel, who also served as Indian Diaspora Champion in former prime minister David Cameron's government, swore her oath as a re-elected MP in the House of Commons on the 'Bible' last week. *—AP*

B'desh asks varsities to close after riots

DHAKA, 17 JULY

Authorities in Bangladesh urged all universities to close on Wednesday, after at least six people died in violent protests over the allocation of government jobs.

Some universities quickly moved to comply, but others, including the major university at the center of the violence, were still deciding how to respond.

The University Grants Commission asked all public and private universities to suspend classes and empty their dormitories until further notice, in order to protect students. The country's universities are run autonomously and the request did not have legal force.

Authorities said that at least six people were killed on Tuesday in violence across the country as student protesters clashed with pro-government student activists and with police, and violence was reported around the capital of Dhaka, the southeastern city of Chattogram and the northern city of Rangpur.

On Wednesday, stray protests took place at Dhaka University and elsewhere in the country. Police were deployed on the campus, while paramilitary border forces patrolled the streets in Dhaka and other big cities.

The protests began late last month, demanding an end to a quota that reserves 30% of government jobs for relatives of veterans of Bangladesh's 1971 war of independence in 1971, but turned violent on Monday as protesters clashed with counter-protests and police at Dhaka University, leaving 100 people injured. *—PTI*

Students clash over quota system at Jahangir Nagar University at Savar outside Dhaka, in Bangladesh *PHOTO: PTI*

Pak government faces criticism over move to ban Imran's party

ISLAMABAD, 17 JULY

Pakistan's ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party looked confused and its leaders sent mixed signals on the issue of banning jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI), a move that has been criticised by friends and foes.

PML-N senior leaders were either trying to put up a bold-face to justify the decision or playing safe by saying that the final word on banning the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) party was not out yet.

Imran Khan *PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA*

The cracks in the party were also visible as a senior leader opposed the decision.

The Express Tribune newspaper reported on Wednesday that one member of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) claimed that the summary to try PTI leaders for treason under Article 6 had already been moved to the Supreme Court. Contrarily, another member suggested that the matter would be taken to Parliament after consultations. To top it off, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar stated that no decision had been made in the first place, leaving everyone in limbo.

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif defended the decision but elaborated that the decision would be placed before the Parliament after consulting all allied parties. *—PTI*

OUTSIDE HOUSE

Former-SL skipper shot dead in front of his family

NEW DELHI, 17 JULY

Former Sri Lanka Under-19 skipper Dhammika Niroshana died on Wednesday at the age of 41 after being shot by an unidentified person outside his house, according to ESPN cricinfo. ESPN cricinfo stated that the shooters are still at large and the Sri Lankan Police are currently investigating to identify the person and arrest them. Between 2001 and 2004, Niroshana appeared in 12 first-class games and 8 List A matches for the Galle Cricket Club and scored more than 300 runs, bagging 19 wickets. *—ANI*

PHOTO: FB

SA ex-prez faces expulsion for joining rival party

CAPE TOWN, 17 JULY

Former South African president Jacob Zuma was expected to face a disciplinary hearing with the African National Congress party on Wednesday, after campaigning against the organization he once led as head of a new political party in national elections in May.

The hearing could lead to Zuma, 82, being expelled from the ANC, which he joined in the late 1950s when it was a liberation movement fighting against the apartheid system of white minority rule.

Zuma was forced to step down as South African president in 2018 amid allegations of corruption and has been embroiled in a political feud since then with President Cyril Ramaphosa.

Zuma's split with the ANC was confirmed in December, when he appeared at a press conference and announced he would campaign for the recently-founded MK Party in the May 29 elections. *—AP*

Bangkok hotel deaths: Cyanide traces found in foreigners' coffee

PHOTO: X

BANGKOK, 17 JULY

Doctors who performed autopsies on the six Bangkok hotel guests who died mysteriously confirmed Wednesday that they had traces of cyanide in their blood.

Dr Kornkiat Vongpaisarnsin, head of the forensic medicine department at Chulalongkorn University's medical school, said at a news conference that a CAT scan showed no signs of blunt force trauma on the dead, reinforcing the hypothesis that they had been poisoned.

Police found traces of cyanide in the cups of six Vietnamese and American guests at a central Bangkok luxury hotel and one of them is believed to have poisoned the others over a bad investment, Thai authorities said Wednesday.

The bodies were found Tuesday in the Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok, a landmark at a central intersection in the capital busy with malls, government buildings and public transit. *—AP*

153 ATTACKS IN 2024

ISIS attacks to double in Iraq & Syria: US

BAGHDAD, 17 JULY

The US Central Command said Wednesday that the Islamic State group is trying "to reconstitute" as the number of attacks in Syria and Iraq is on track to double those of the previous year.

IS has claimed 153 attacks in both countries in the first six months of 2024, CENTCOM said in a statement. According to a US defence official, who spoke on condition of anonymity as he wasn't allowed to speak publicly on the matter, the group was behind 121 attacks in Syria and Iraq in 2023.

"The increase in attacks indicates ISIS is attempting to reconstitute following several years of decreased capability," CENTCOM said.

The announcement comes just after the 10-year mark since the militant group declared its caliphate in large parts of Iraq and Syria. The group ruled an area half the size of the United Kingdom where it attempted to enforce its extreme interpretation of Islam, which included attacks on religious minority groups

ISIS ruled an area half the size of the United Kingdom in Syria where it attempted to enforce its extreme interpretation of Islam *PHOTO: PTI*

Militants also killed thousands of members of the Yazidi religious minority and kidnapped thousands of women and children. A coalition of more than 80 countries, led by the United States, was formed to fight IS, which lost its hold on the territory it controlled in Iraq and 2017 and in Syria in 2019, although sleeper cells remain in both countries and abroad.

Iraqi officials say that they can keep the IS threat under control with their own forces and have entered into talks with the US aimed at winding down the mission of the US-led military coalition in Iraq. *—AP*

ISIS claims responsibility for Oman mosque attack

MUSCAT, 17 JULY

The jihadist group Islamic State has claimed responsibility for the Oman mosque attack.

Six people, including a policeman, have been killed and 28 others injured in a rare shooting attack near a Shia Muslim mosque in Oman's capital, Muscat, police say.

IS says three of its members were involved in the attack.

Police gave no details about the identities of the victims and gunmen, or the motive. But Pakistan said four Pakistanis were among those killed in a "terrorist attack" on the Imam Ali Mosque. India also said one of its citizens was killed. Supporters of the group celebrated the shooting on social media networks.

IS has repeatedly targeted Shia ceremonies, processions and worshippers in countries like Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. But it has never before claimed an attack in Oman, where the Shia are a minority.

Video showed a crowd running for cover inside the mosque's courtyard as gunshots were heard.

Worshippers had gathered there on the eve of the Shia holy day of Ashura.

The police statement expressed condolences to the victims' families and said an investigation into the circumstances of the incident was under way.

It also emphasised "the necessity of obtaining information from official sources and disregarding unreliable information". *—BBC News*

Bengal association offers potatoes at Rs 26 per kg to govt

KOLKATA, 17 JULY

West Bengal Cold Storage Association (WBCSA) has offered to supply potatoes to the state government at Rs 26 per kg amid high prices in the retail market, officials said on Wednesday. At present, potatoes are being sold in the retail market at Rs 37-40 per kg, depending on the size, they said. "We have sent a proposal to the state government about supplying potatoes at Rs 1,300 per 50 kg packet (Rs 26 per kg) with a minimum size of 35mm to Sufal Bangla. The price is ex-cold storage gate," an official of the WBCSA's Hooghly unit said. The cold storage price currently is Rs 28-29 per kg. Despite cold storage data indicating that 45 lakh tonnes of potatoes are available, in real terms, it is 30 per cent lower after accounting for very small size varieties and wastage, they said. *—PTI*

T'puram & Mumbai airports see surge in passenger traffic

T'PURAM/MUMBAI, 17 JULY

Thiruvananthapuram International Airport (TRV) has witnessed a record-breaking increase in passenger traffic in Q1 FY2024-25, with over 1.26 million passengers travelling through the airport. "This represents a 21 per cent growth compared to Q1 2023-24, when 1.038 million passengers were recorded. TRV now processes over 400,000 passengers monthly. Of the total passengers, 661,000 were domestic, while 598,000 travelled internationally," a TRV release said on Wednesday. Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) witnessed a significant surge in the number of passengers travelling through the airport, with over 13.4 million total passengers travelling in the first quarter (Q1) of the financial year (FY) 2024, an increase of over 7 per cent compared last year. *—PTI/ANI*

Assam's Tezpur Airport to be shut for 1.5 years

TEZPUR, 17 JULY

Fight services will be shut at the Tezpur airport in Assam in October for one-and-half years for maintenance works, a senior official said on Wednesday. Tezpur Airport Director G Shiva Kumar said passenger flights will be suspended from 1 October, 2024, to 31 March, 2026. "This is due to the resurfacing works of the runway along with other projects to improve the facilities at the terminal," he said. Tezpur Airport is adjacent to the Tezpur Base of the Indian Air Force, and the runway is used for both commercial and fighter aircraft. Tezpur Air Force Base had earlier informed the Tezpur Salonibari Passenger Airport Authority about the maintenance work, for which passenger aircraft services will be temporarily halted. At present, a 90-seater SpiceJet flight fly directly from Tezpur to Kolkata daily. In addition, two airlines operate daily flights to Kolkata via Guwahati, Pasighat and Tezpur. Airport terminal can accommodate a total of 400 passengers at a time. *—PTI*

Musk's SpaceX, X to move from California to Texas

SAN FRANCISCO, 17 JULY

Billionaire Elon Musk says he's moving the headquarters of SpaceX and social media company X to Texas from California. Musk posted on X Tuesday that he plans on moving SpaceX from Hawthorne, California to Starbase, Texas. X will move to Austin from San Francisco. He called a new law signed Monday by California Governor Gavin Newsom that bars school districts from requiring staff to notify parents of their child's gender identification change the "final straw". "I did make it clear to Governor Newsom about a year ago that laws of this nature would force families and companies to leave California to protect their children," Musk wrote. Tesla, where Musk is CEO, moved its corporate headquarters to, California in 2021. *—PTI*

ICC: Govt should rationalise customs duty this Budget

It seeks not to impose tax on dividends to boost manufacturing

NEW DELHI, 17 JULY

Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) has suggested the government to rationalise customs duties in various sectors including steel, solar battery, aluminum, and lithium cells in a bid to boost domestic manufacturing.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to present the Union Budget for financial year 2024-25 on 23 July.

ICC President Ameya Prabhu said protective measures are needed for the growth of domestic industry in sectors including steel, solar battery, aluminum, and lithium cells.

"There is a need for rationalisation of customs duty in these specific sectors in a holistic manner. Huge potential is there to boost domestic manufacturing and make India a global hub for manufacturing," Prabhu said.

He added that levies on raw materials impact domestic players particularly the downstream firms.

He also asked for correction in inverted duty structure by cutting down duty on mixed petroleum gas from 5 per cent to 2.5 per cent.

On the taxation side, the chamber has suggested setting up a commission to review the Income Tax Act 1961 in its entirety and simplify the provisions *PHOTO: @INDIANCHAMBER.ORG*

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to present the Union Budget for financial year 2024-25 on 23 July

On the taxation side, the chamber has suggested setting up a commission to review the Income Tax Act 1961 in its entirety and simplify the provisions.

"This is an old Act. Every year in the Budget, amendments are made which has made this Act complex to understand. These amendments have resulted in many anomalies which in turn have given rise to a large number of legal cases," the chamber has said.

Prabhu further recommended the government not to impose tax on dividends.

He added that during his tenure so far the ICC has spread its wings further nationally and internationally and become a truly world-class chamber. "We have opened 25 chapters globally in countries including New Zealand, the US, Europe, Australia, Korea and Middle East nations," he said. *—PTI*

TARGET TO COMPETITORS

Exposure to infra sector helps LIC, SBI outshine peers

MUMBAI, 17 JULY

Shares of state-owned behemoth Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) have outperformed rivals like HDFC Life and ICICI Prudential Life as it placed bets on India's growth sectors, including infrastructure, while the private sector concentrated bet on tech, consumer and consumer-related BFSI companies.

LIC's stock has gained nearly 79 per cent from Rs 620 on June 18, 2023, to Rs 1,109.15 at the closing on Tuesday, according to stock exchange data.

In contrast, HDFC Life gave a negative return, if Tuesday's closing price of Rs 646.55 on the BSE is compared to Rs 666.55 a year back.

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Co delivered a return of 12 per cent, considering its stock price rise from Rs 582 on June 18, 2023, to Rs 654.10 on June 16, 2024.

Most Indian insurance companies are yet to capitalise on the emergence of the country's infrastructure sector, analysts said.

PHOTO: PTI

Indian insurance companies have concentrated investments in the BFSI, IT, and consumer sectors - all of which have been underperformers in the recent past.

For India, a strong government focus on the sector with large spending, supporting initiatives and encouraging policies, and improving governance, the infrastructure industry has come off-age. This has helped the infra sector to outperform all other sectors, according to analysts.

SBI, with its higher exposure to the infrastructure sector, has seen its stock gain 48 per cent in the year while those of its private counterparts HDFC Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, ICICI Bank and Axis Bank have gained in the range of (-)3 per cent to 24 per cent. *—PTI*

Small stocks reap big gains; BSE midcap jumps 30%

NEW DELHI, 17 JULY

Smaller stocks have emerged as markets' favourites so far this year, giving big returns to investors amid optimism over the country's macroeconomic fundamentals and surge in domestic liquidity.

Till 16 July this year, the BSE midcap gauge has jumped 10,984.72 points or 29.81 per cent, while the smallcap index has surged 11,628.13 points or 27.24 per cent.

In comparison, the BSE 30-share benchmark Sensex has rallied 8,476.29 points or 11.73 per cent so far this year.

Experts said equity markets are experiencing a prolonged bull run, and it is during this time that the midcap and smallcap segments tend to outshine their larger counterparts.

The BSE midcap gauge hit its all-time high of 48,175.21 on July 16 this year, while the smallcap index reached its lifetime peak of 54,617.75 on July 8.

The BSE benchmark hit its record high of 80,898.3 on July 16.

The midcap index tracks companies with a market value that is on average one-fifth of blue-chips, while smallcap firms are almost a tenth of that universe.

According to analysts, smaller stocks are generally bought by local investors, while overseas investors focus on blue-chips or large firms.

Experts said active participation from domestic investors has played a big role in pushing the broader market counters. *—PTI*

FOR HIGH RISK INVESTORS

New asset class is aimed at bridging gap between mutual funds and portfolio management services *PHOTO: PTI*

SEBI's proposal on new asset class looks promising

NEW DELHI, 17 JULY

Capital markets regulator SEBI's proposal for introducing a new asset class for high-risk profile investors can help them gain access to a newer set of strategies including long-short equity fund and inverse Exchange-traded Fund (ETF).

The new asset class is aimed at bridging the gap between mutual funds and Portfolio Management Services (PMS) in terms of flexibility in portfolio construction.

The SEBI's consultation paper floated on Tuesday on 'new asset class' and creating a structure for differentiated, higher risk strategies looks very promising, Radhika Gupta, MD and CEO of Edelweiss Mutual Fund said.

"India is finally opening up to different investment products, styles and approaches. Passive, factor, inverse ETFs, alts and more. There is no single way to invest," she added.

In its consultation paper, the regulator said the new asset class will provide a regulated product with features like SIP (Systematic Investment Plan), higher risk-taking capability, and a higher ticket size, to meet the needs of the emerging category of investors.

The regulator suggested a minimum investment of Rs 10 lakh for the new asset class, which could be permitted to invest in derivatives for purposes beyond just hedging and rebalancing. Inverse ETF aims to generate returns that are negatively correlated to the returns of the underlying index. SEBI believes that over the years, a notable opportunity for a new asset class has emerged between mutual funds and PMS in terms of flexibility in portfolio construction. *—PTI*

Suzuki plans 10 yrs strategies for mkts including India

NEW DELHI, 17 JULY

Suzuki Motor Corporation on Wednesday said it will focus on aspects like light body structures and usage of small batteries to power its models including electric vehicles across various markets, including India.

Outlining the company's technology strategy for the next ten years, the Japanese automaker stated that compact and light vehicles not only reduce CO_2 emissions during use, but also reduce the resources and CO_2 emissions in production, thus contributing to resource conservation and CO_2 reduction.

The automaker, which has around 58 per cent stake in the country's largest carmaker maruti Suzuki India, said it will further evolve the lightweight and safety body 'HEARTECT', and also work to minimise energy consumption through weight reduction technology.

Besides, moving ahead Suzuki will achieve minimal energy consumption with a circular economy which is to save the total use of resources by designing products that can be easily disassembled with recycling and reuse in mind, it stated. *—PTI*

Goa aim at new mkts for tourism via int'l trade

PANAJI, 17 JULY

Goa is looking forward to tap new and emerging markets through participation in global trade fairs after international tourism was affected due to the Russia-Ukraine war and other problems, minister Rohan Khaunte said on Wednesday.

During COVID-19, the international footfall in Goa was only 33,000, which has now increased to 4.5 lakh for this particular year (calendar year), Tourism Minister Khaunte said in the state assembly.

Responding to a question raised by Goa Forward Party MLA Vijai Sardesai in the assembly, he said after the COVID-19 pandemic, the perception about tourism in the state is changing, taking it away from beaches.

Sardesai said Goa spent Rs 63 crore in the last four years (on various events), including Rs 29.84 crore to promote the state within the country.

Former chief minister late Manohar Parrikar had emphasised on the pre-audit of roadshows and that accountability parameters should be framed, he said.

PHOTO: PTI

The state tourism department participated in the WTM (World Travel Mart) London, ITB, Berlin, IITF and other events, Khaunte said.

Earlier, only Goa used to participate in these events but now Ladakh and states like Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka are attending.

"During the events, we have serious B2B and B2C trade meetings. The minutes are placed before an empowered committee before we decide the next course of action," he added *—PTI*

GRSE to build ocean research vessel

KOLKATA, 17 JULY

Defence PSU Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited (GRSE) signed a contract with the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR) for constructing an ocean research vessel, an official said on Wednesday.

The contract, worth approximately Rs 840 crore, was signed between GRSE and NCPOR officials for the construction of the vessel in 42 months, the shipyard informed the stock exchanges. *—PTI*

Glenmark gets nod for seizure drug

NEW DELHI, 17 JULY

Glenmark Pharmaceuticals Ltd on Wednesday said it has received final approval from the US health regulator for its generic capsules used to treat certain types of seizure.

The approval by the US Food & Drug Administration (USFDA) is for Topiramate capsules of strengths 15 mg and 25 mg, Glenmark Pharmaceuticals said in a statement.

Glenmark's Topiramate capsules USP, 15 mg and 25 mg have been determined by the FDA to be bioequivalent and therapeutically equivalent to Topamax capsules, 15 mg and 25 mg of Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Inc., and will be distributed in the US by Glenmark Pharmaceuticals Inc., USA, it added.

Topamax Capsules achieved annual sales of $21.9 million *PHOTO: PTI*

Topamax Capsules, 15 mg and 25 mg market achieved annual sales of approximately USD 21.9 million, the company said citing IQVIATM sales data for the 12-month period ended May 2024. *—PTI*

IN AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

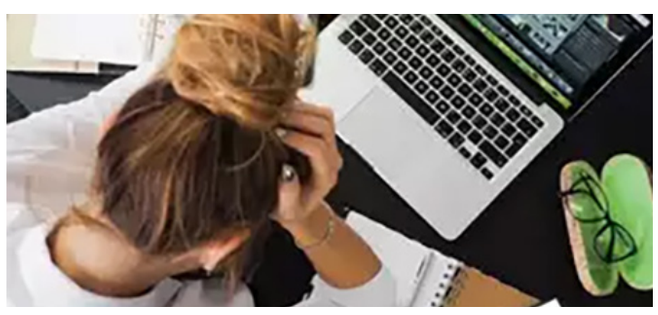
Only 57.44% BTech holders are employable

NEW DELHI, 17 JULY

Only 57.44 per cent of BE and BTech graduates in India are employable in the automotive industry, according to a study by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), which recommended curriculum revisions in colleges.

'SIAM EV Talent Landscape in India' report which was released on Tuesday, mentioned that there is a 38 per cent collective shortfall of faculty in top Engineering institutes as high-quality EV educators prefer working in the industry than in Education.

Indian automotive industry will need up to 2 lakh skilled people by 2030 to meet the government's vision of 30 per cent electric vehicle adoption, as per the report. The report was released by Union Minister of Heavy Industries and Steel, HD Kumaraswamy, on the sidelines of an SIAM-organised workshop.



India needs to increase its addition of EV-ready workers from 15,000 to 30,000 *PHOTO: ANI*

"Only 57.44 per cent of BE and BTech graduates are employable. Even less for EV and digital. There is a need to skill, reskill and upskill. It is recommended to do curriculum revision across 15 competencies in India," the report noted.

A set of 40 technical competencies which would be crucial for realising the goal of 30 per cent Electric Vehicle by 2030.

The report noted that the "collective faculty shortfall is 38 per cent across top Engineering institutes."

The report also stated that around 127 million learning hours are required to train fresh talent as well as to re-skill existing talent in the automotive sector.

India needs to increase its annual addition of EV-ready workers from 15,000 to 30,000 to achieve full localisation of EV components by 2030, as per the study. *—ANI*

Shaadi.com & Truecaller ally to elevate user safety

NEW DELHI, 17 JULY

Shaadi.com, the leading platform for matchmaking in India, has announced a strategic partnership with Truecaller, the global leader in verifying contacts and blocking unwanted communication. This collaboration aims to elevate trust and safety in matchmaking and deliver a verified and contextual communication experience.

In an era where smartphone users receive inundated by countless calls, Shaadi.com recognises the significance of offering a trusted, safe, and secure experience for its affiliates and customers. Trust is fundamental to the matchmaking process, particularly in the online realm where personal connections and potential lifelong relationships are established.

PHOTO: PTI

With Truecaller's Verified Business Caller ID solution, Shaadi.com has enhanced its phone-based communication by providing authentic brand identity, context, trust, and safety. This empowers users to identify genuine business calls from Shaadi.com, significantly improving their communication experience. *—ANI*

SKY holds 2nd spot in ICC T20I batting rankings

DUBAI, 17 JULY

The big-hitting Suryakumar Yadav is the highest-placed Indian at second spot, while young opener Yashasvi Jaiswal occupies the sixth position in the ICC T20I batting rankings issued on Wednesday.Ruturaj Gaikwad has dropped a place to the eighth position in the T20 batters' list, which was updated following India's recent 4-1 series triumph over Zimbabwe. Jaiswal was the big winner following his 141 runs in the series as he rose four places, behind No.1 ranked batter Travis Head of Australia and Suryakumar. Shubman Gill,moved up a whopping 36 places to 37th.—*PTI*

B'luru to host 2nd edition of Trinity Golf Champ League

BENGALURU, 17 JULY

The second edition of the Trinity Golf Champions League (TGCL) will take place in Bangalore this September.Building on the success of its inaugural season in September 2023, this year TGCL is featuring a minimum of four tournament rounds played in an IPL-style format, teams representing seven cities in India and one from Sri Lanka will compete, with Bengaluru taking center stage as the host city. This Ryders Cup format adds a thrilling layer of collaboration and team spirit, transforming every match into a nail-biting spectacle. The excitement is further amplified by the expected participation of professional golfers alongside celebrity golfers and amateur golfers. The winning team will walk away with a significant cash prize, raising the stakes for all participants."Golf is a sport that requires immense skill and focus, but it can often be seen as an individual pursuit. —*PTI*

Ecuador's Richard Carapaz celebrates as he crosses the finish line to win the seventeenth stage of the Tour de France cycling race over 177.8 kilometers **PHOTO: PTI**

Scottie Scheffler is adjusting to link golf

TROON, 17 JULY

The first stage of Scottie Scheffler's rise to the top of golf felt like warp speed. He went from No. 15 in the world to No. 1 in the span of five tournaments, and that was before he won the Masters for the first time. Now he's on a level not seen since Tiger Woods was in his prime. Scheffler is not the biggest draw at the British Open, not with Woods in the field. Rory McIlroy remains a big attraction, especially in the U.K., and he comes into Royal Troon as a sentimental favorite from his sad collapse in the U.S. Open and going 10 years without a major. But any conversation at the final major of the year starts with Scheffler, a heavy favorite as he has been in every major this year. And that has taken him time to fully appreciate his status in the game.—*PTI*

WJ Squash C'ships: Bawa Signs Off with Bronze

PUNE, 17 JULY

India's Shaurya Bawa went down to Egyptian top seed Mohamed Zakaria in the boys' singles semifinals of the World Junior Squash Championships in Houston on Tuesday. Bawa, seeded 17/32, lost 5-11, 5-11, 9-11 to last year's runner-up Zakaria, with the 41-minute long contest closer than what the scoreline suggests. Bawa is only the second Indian male after Kush Kumar (in 2014) to reach the World junior semifinals and will collect a bronze medal. —*PTI*

PARIS OLYMPICS

IOA releases list of 117 athletes

IOA names 140 support staffs; Shot putter Abha Khatua is missing from

NEW DELHI, 17 JULY

India will be represented by 117 athletes at this month's Paris Olympics after the sports ministry cleared the final contingent that also features 140 support staff and officials, of which 72 have been approved at "cost to the government" to meet the "requirements" of the traveling sportspersons.

The only qualified athlete missing from the list is shot-putter Abha Khatua. The Games will run from 26 July to 11 August. Khatua, who cut through the world rankings quota, was dropped without any explanation after her name was found missing from the World Athletics' list of Olympic participants a few days ago. There is no word yet on whether her name has been knocked off owing to injury, a doping violation, or any other technical issue.

The rest of the contingent that has been cleared is on expected lines with London Olympics bronze medal-winning former shooter Gagan Narang as chef-de-mission. Narang is also a vice president of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA).

Abha Khatua **PHOTO: PTI**

"The permissible limit for stay of support personnel in the Games Village against accreditation as per norms of the Paris Organising Committee for the 2024 Olympic Games is 67 including 11 1OA Contingent Officials, which includes five Medical Team Members," stated a letter from the ministry to IOA President P T Usha, explaining the ratio of support staff allowed as per the size of the contingent.

The golf competition will be conducted at the Le Golf National in Guyancourt, Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, which is around 42km from Paris. To ensure hassle-free travel and practice arrangements, the Indian golf contingent will stay at a hotel near the venue instead of the Games Village. —*PTI*

Race walker Suraj Panwar gears up for debut

NEW DELHI, 17 JULY

Plucked out of his comfort zone and training without a partner for a mixed event in what is to be his debut Olympics, race walker Suraj Panwar is gearing up for quite a roller-coaster ride in Paris this month.

But he is quite used to upheaval. He was born into it.

The 23-year-old was an infant when his forest guard father Udai Singh Panwar was killed in the line of duty while trying to prevent the illegal logging of trees. He was raised single-handedly by his mother Poonam, who worked at the forest department's nursery in a village near Dehradun and supported his sporting ambitions. "I have never competed in a marathon race walk mixed relay in my career, this is going to be my first time. So, I don't even have a target timing in my mind. But, it's a matter of representing my country and I will give my 100 percent," Panwar told PTI in an interview.

Suraj Panwar **PHOTO: PTI**

The event was first introduced in a major championship at the World Athletics Race Walking Team Championships in Antalya, Turkiye in April. It will make its Olympic debut in Paris. —*PTI*

APC appoints Deepa Malik as representative for South Asia

NEW DELHI, 17 JULY

Deepa Malik **PHOTO: PTI**

India's first woman Paralympic medallist Deepa Malik has been named sub-regional representative for South Asia by the Asian Paralympic Committee (APC). This appointment, which was confirmed during the 34th Executive Board meeting of the APC, signifies a significant step forward for gender diversity and athlete-centric leadership in para-sports. —*PTI*

CAN INDIAN WRESTLERS DELIVER IN PARIS?

NEW DELHI, 17 JULY

Indian wrestlers have delivered a medal every single time at the Olympics since the 2008 Beijing edition.

Success in four consecutive editions has enhanced the status of wrestling as a prime Olympic sport in the country. There was success at the junior level too.

The sport also produced U23 world champions. It raised hopes of big success in Paris.

It was Sushil Kumar who changed the way wrestling was perceived in the country by winning a bronze in 2008. He bettered his medal four years later in the London Games, where he fetched a silver. While Yogeshwar Dutt also won a bronze in the British capital.

Sakshi Malik carried forward the trend by bagging a bronze in Rio in 2016 and Ravi Dahiya and Bajrang Punia made it a double delight in the delayed Tokyo Games (2021). —*PTI*

RETURN OF THE KING

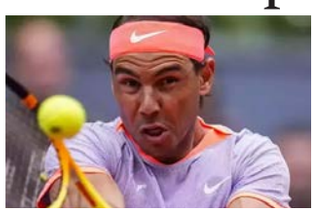
Nadal named in US Open entry list

NEW YORK, 17 JULY

Rafael Nadal was on the U.S. Open entry list released Tuesday via a protected ranking, although that doesn't necessarily mean he will compete in the year's last Grand Slam tournament.

Nadal has been dealing with injuries for the past two seasons and playing sporadically. He is participating in his first tournament in one and a half months this week in Bastad, Sweden, winning a doubles match alongside Casper Ruud on Monday, then beating Leo Borg, the son of former player Bjorn Borg, in singles on Tuesday. The 38-year-old Nadal won four of his 22 Grand Slam titles at the U.S. Open where play begins on Aug. 26in 2010, 2013, 2017, and 2019. He sat out the event in three of the past four years, losing in the fourth round in 2022.

He is expected to compete at the Paris Olympics, which starts its tennis competition on 27 July and is being held at Roland Garros, the same as the French Open. But it's not clear how much or even if Nadal will continue to play after that. The U.S. Tennis Association announced its entry lists for women's and men's singles based on Monday's WTA and ATP rankings, led by the two No. 1s, Iga Swiatek and Jannik Sinner. The two defending champions in New York, Coco Gauff and Novak Djokovic, are both currently ranked No. 2. —*PTI*



Rafael Nadal **PHOTO: PTI**

Nagal-Drzewiecki pair bow out

BASTAD, 17 JULY

Olympic-bound Indian tennis player Sumit Nagal and his Polish partner Karol Drzewiecki made a first-round exit after suffering a straight-set loss in the Nordea Open here. The Indo-Polish pair suffered a 3-6 4-6 defeat in the hands of the French duo of Alexandre Muller and Luca Van Assche in a 59-minute round of 16 contest on Tuesday. The 26-year-old however is still alive in the singles event. —*PTI*

PT Usha chides WFI ad-hoc panel

NEW DELHI, 17 JULY

IOA President P.T. Usha on Wednesday came down heavily on the ad-hoc panel that managed the suspended WFI, saying the committee did not do due diligence and missed out on giving the names of wrestler Antim Panghal's coaches in the long list, sent to the Paris Olympic Games organizers.

The Indian Olympic Association's reaction came in the wake of a delay in visa clearance for Panghal's preferred coaches for the Gamesa. The 19-year-old Panghal, who trains in Hisar, was the first Indian wrestler to qualify for the Paris Games when she won a bronze at the World Championship in 2023.She wants her coaches Bhagat Singh and Vikas to travel with her along with physiotherapist Heera.

The IOA has cleared all the names but the support staff members attached with Panghal are still awaiting visa clearance."

PT Usha **PHOTO: PTI**

- IOA President P.T. Usha on Wednesday came down heavily on the ad-hoc panel that managed the suspended WFI

Antrim won India an Olympic quota as early as in September 2023 by claiming a bronze medal in the World Wrestling Championships in Belgrade. In its wisdom the Ad Hoc Committee, administering wrestling, chose not to include the names of Antim's coach or physiotherapist in the long list of names sent to the Olympic Games Organising Committee," Usha said in a statement. —*PTI*

Paris Mayor takes pre-Olympics dip to prove Seine is clean

PARIS, 17 JULY

The mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, has taken a long-awaited swim in the murky waters of the Seine amid joy and relief that the river is finally clean enough for outdoor Olympic swimming events later this month.

Wearing goggles and a wet suit, the 65-year-old city leader swam breaststroke before immersing her face and beginning a front crawl, covering about 100 metres (about 110 yards) downstream.

"It's wonderful, very, very pleasant," Hidalgo told reporters of the greenish water. "It's fresh but not cold." She was joined by senior local officials and chief organiser of the Paris Games, Tony Estanguet, a gold medal-winning canoeist who has been sweating on the state of the Seine before the opening of the games next week.

Anne Hidalgo **PHOTO: X**

The swimming leg of the Olympics triathlon is set to take place in its waters on 30-31 July and 5 August, followed by the open-water swimming on 8-9 August.

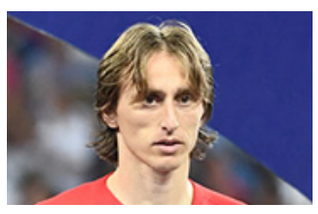
On the initial date, the hashtag "jechiedanslaSeine" ("I'm pooping in the Seine") trended on social media as some threatened to protest the Olympics by defecating upstream. Despite an investment of 1.4 billion euros ($1.5bn) to prevent sewage leaks into the waterway, the river had been continually failing water quality tests until the start of this month. Al Jazeera —*Al Jazeera*

Luka Modric extends Real Madrid contract until 2025

MADRID, 17 JULY

Real Madrid have officially confirmed that Luka Modric, the iconic midfielder, has signed a new contract with the club, extending his stay until 2025. Modric's journey with Real Madrid, which began in 2012 when he joined from Tottenham Hotspur, has been nothing short of remarkable. Despite facing challenges and seemingly losing prominence in the team during the early parts of the last season, the Croatian maestro proved his worth with stellar performances in the latter half, reaffirming his indispensable role in the squad.

"Real Madrid CF and Luka Modric have agreed to extend the contract of our captain, who remains tied to the club until 30 June, 2025," read the official statement from the club. This announcement also marks a significant transition, as Modric assumes the role of club captain following Nacho Fernandez's departure as a free agent this summer. Throughout his illustrious career at Santiago Bernabeu, Modric has etched his name into the annals of football history. —*PTI*



Luka Modric
PHOTO: X / @LUKAMODRIC10

- "Real Madrid CF and Luka Modric have agreed to extend the contract of our captain, who remains tied to the club until 30 June, 2025," read the official statement from the club.

ASIA CUP T20

The Indian women's cricket team arrived here on Tuesday for the Asia Cup T20 beginning in Dambulla on 19 July. Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) shared the arrival photos of India and Bangladesh squad on social media. India will open their campaign against arch-rivals Pakistan on the opening day of the competition. The day game on 19 July will be played between UAE and Nepal **PHOTO: X/@OFFICIALSLC**

'STRINGENT ACTION'

FIFA to probe into Argentina players' racist chants

PARIS, 17 JULY

FIFA said on Wednesday it was opening an investigation into racist chants by Argentina players after they won the Copa America.

"FIFA is aware of a video circulating on social media and the incident is being looked into," a spokesperson for world football's governing body said.

They added: "FIFA strongly condemns any form of discrimination by anyone including players, fans and officials."

The chants were heard during a live video posted on social media by Chelsea and Argentina midfielder Enzo Fernandez from the team bus in the wake of the Copa victory over Colombia in Miami on Sunday.

Some players, including 23-year-old Fernandez, sing a chant dating back to the 2022 World Cup final in which Argentina beat France.

Enzo Fernandez **PHOTO: X/BEIN SPORTS**

The song targets France's star striker Kylian Mbappe among others and includes racist and homophobic insults.

Chelsea had earlier announced they had launched an internal disciplinary procedure against Fernandez over the incident.

Fernandez has apologized and the club said it had launched an "internal disciplinary procedure."

"Chelsea Football Club finds all forms of discriminatory behavior completely unacceptable," it added.

"We acknowledge and appreciate our player's public apology and will use this as an opportunity to educate."

Fernandez, who joined Chelsea from Benfica for a Premier League record fee of £105 million ($136.8 million) in 2023, said in his apology: "The song includes highly offensive language and there is no excuse for these words.

"I stand against discrimination in all forms and apologize for getting caught up in the euphoria of our Copa America celebrations."

The French Football Federation (FFF) complained to FIFA about the chants on Monday.

FFF president Philippe Diallo "condemned with the greatest firmness the unacceptable racist and discriminatory remarks made against players of the France team."

France beat Argentina in the last 16 of the 2018 World Cup. —*PTI*

Mexico fires head coach 2 weeks after Copa exit

DUBAI, 17 JULY

Jaime Lozano has been fired as head coach two weeks after Mexico's first-round exit at the Copa América.

The Mexican Football Federation on Tuesday said Lozano declined its offer to stay and work as an assistant to the next coach for two years and potentially take over again after the 2026 World Cup. "This was one of the toughest decisions I have to make," Lozano said on his official social media accounts. "It is a matter of principles and it's because of the change of direction from the original project."

Javier Aguirre, who is a close friend of the Mexican federation commissioner Juan Carlos Rodríguez, is considered the main candidate for the job. Aguirre, who coached Mexico at the 2002 and 2010 World Cups, had earlier declined a position to help Lozano from afar.

Jaime Lozano
PHOTO: X / @COPAAMERICA

The federation said the new coach could be confirmed as early as the first week of August. "Jimmy" Lozano won just 10 out of the 21 games he was in charge. At Copa America, Mexico edged Jamaica, lost to Venezuela, and tied with Ecuador to be eliminated out of Group B. —*PTI*